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Living papers concerning Christian evidences, doctrine and morals.

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LIVING PAPERS

CONCERNING

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES, DOCTRINE, AND MORALS.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

THE names of two of the writers of Themes contained in this Volume appear as contributors to the Series for the first time, viz., Professor Elmslie and Dean Howson. Professor Elmslie discusses Ernest Renan and his criticism of Christ. The peculiar position and influence of Renan as a critic, and the character and contents of his Autobiography recently published, fully justify the exceptional method of discussion adopted in this Tract. The Dean of Chester founds an argument for the authority and truth of the New Testament on the agreement of the contents of the four undisputed Epistles of St. Paul with each other, and the other books of the New Testament.

An important branch of the Theistic argument, is discussed by Canon Rawlinson, in his "Religious teachings of the Sublime and Beautiful in Nature." Dr. Blaikie draws an argument for the Divine origin of the Bible, from its vitality, which is due to the unity given to its contents, notwithstanding its manifold authorship and forms of composition, by the grand design, running through the whole, of revealing God as drawing near to sinful men in the way of grace. Dr. Porter grounds an argument for the truth of Christianity on its threefold character, as history, doctrine, and life, on the nature and mutual relations and inter-

dependence of these three elements. Prebendary Row contributes an argument for the historical reality of the Christ of the Gospels from the unity of character which we find in the records of the Evangelists, and which is utterly unaccountable on any other theory than that the portrait was drawn from life.

Additions are thus made to the branches of the Series devoted to Christian Theism, to questions relating to the Divine origin of Christianity and the Bible, and the personality and character of Christ. It is believed that the contents of the present volume will be found to be equal in value and importance to those of the three previous ones, and that the character of the Series will be fully maintained by future issues. Willing assistance has been promised by eminent writers in various departments. Much remains to be done to work out the various lines indicated in the programme of the Series,[1] critical, historical, doctrinal, ethical, scientific, etc., etc.; but as there is no sign of abatement of interest in the Series shown by the public, so there will be no relaxation on the part of the Society in its endeavour to carry out this important undertaking to a worthy close.

[1] See Preface to Volume I.

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CHRISTIANITY

AS

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND LIFE

BY

REV. NOAH PORTER, D.D.

Argument of the Tract.

CHRISTIANITY was propagated as history, is a history of supernatural events, is a well-attested history, is still believed to be a true history by the great mass of men over whom it is a controlling power. Were it to cease to be believed its peculiar power would cease from the earth. Christianity is a system of truths. Its facts are doctrines. As history and doctrine, Christianity is given to mould the character and subserve the ends of life. It must be believed as true. The example of Christ must be our pattern and inspiration. It gives life to society, as well as to the individual. The matchless superiority of the matter of the history, the power with which it has wrought on the course of human events, its superhuman combination with doctrines, and its superhuman subservience to life are pointed out. Christianity is next examined as a life. The ideal it presents surpasses any that was distinctly conceived by man before. The failure and defects of the ancient systems are indicated. The vital connection of Christian ethics with Christian doctrine and Christian history are shown to manifest their divine and supernatural character. The attempts that are made to dispose of each of these three heads of proof are examined, and their failure to set aside their single or combined force shown.

CHRISTIANITY

AS

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND LIFE.

CHRISTIANITY, as we find it in the New Testament, claims to be superhuman and supernatural. The argument which we submit in support of this claim is founded on three prominent features; viz.,

The claims of Christianity.

Christianity as a history;
Christianity as truth or doctrine; *and*
Christianity as a life.

In presenting this argument, we propose, in the first place, to describe each of these features of Christianity as it is presented to us in the New Testament. Secondly, we shall ask how far these features prove Christianity to be supernatural when considered apart, and when considered jointly in their mutual dependence and cumulative strength. Thirdly, we shall inquire how far this evidence has been weakened or set aside by the assailants of Christianity.

What is proposed to be done in the Tract.

I. We inquire what Christianity is in the three features named as history, as truth, and as life.

1. What is Christianity as history?

Christianity as history.

Christianity begins as a history,—the history of the most extraordinary Man, by common consent, in character, career, and influence, who ever lived upon the earth, or influenced the course of human affairs. He appears at first as a teacher and reformer. He gathers disciples, impressing Himself by some uncommon fascination, wherever He goes, upon one and another whom He attaches to his person and his cause, in spite of the severity of the service and the frankness with which He explains it. He speaks to the public doctrines that are strange for their searching character, and almost revolutionary for their boldness, but always with the air of authority,—as one divinely commissioned to proclaim the truth and exact obedience. His deeds attract attention and enforce awe at the mysterious power which lay in his hand and his voice. At his touch, the springs of life were renewed; at his voice, the maiden awaked from a sleep which was death; the young man was given to his mother when borne upon his bier to the tomb, and Lazarus broke forth from the tomb itself. He uttered mysterious words respecting his person, his origin, his future destiny, and the triumph of his kingdom, words which, as they grew more explicit, were more and more perplexing for their marvellous

Christ appears as Teacher and Reformer.

His doctrines.

His deeds.

His words concerning His person, origin, and destiny.

import and their astounding audacity,—words at which his most confiding followers were more and more amazed, though they believed He could not deceive them; while his bitterest enemies were more and more exasperated, though they could not satisfy even themselves that

The effect on His friends and foes.

"He had a devil, or was mad."

As we follow this new historic force to the death of its Author, it is all gathered within the person and the life of this one Being; all its energy, and capacity to endure, are in Him; all its power to gain or hold the convictions or the confidence of others is his personal force. He dies in shame and agony: He is buried; and in his tomb are buried with Him the hopes of those who had looked for his coming and kingdom. It is their love, their fidelity alone that causes them to linger around the grave in which their loving Friend and Teacher now lies. Their hearts composed his epitaph:

Everything centres in Christ.

His death, and its effects on His followers.

"We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel."

But He lives again: He remains alive some forty days, and is then removed from the earth. But first He bequeaths to his followers the simple duty of proclaiming the history of his life:

His resurrection and legacy to His followers.

"Ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts i. 8.

At the first recorded assembly of those who re-

The Apostles in the upper room.

ceived this trust, they show that they are mindful of it by taking measures to give it effect:

> "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

Acts i. 21, 26.

Christianity proclaimed as history.

Christianity thenceforward was propagated as history. At the bold proclamation of this completed life, the cause, that was apparently lost, gains as it never had gained before. In the story of the dead Christ who had risen, there was power to shake the nations. When its adherents were commanded, on peril of their lives, not to teach in the name of Jesus, they made the simple reply:

> "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Acts iv. 20.

A new adherent.

A new adherent also appears among the boldest advocates of the cause which he had persecuted —not convinced indeed, by the testimony of the other witnesses, but by the direct manifestation of the Master Himself, from whom he received, not only his commission to teach, but the matter of the gospel which he was to proclaim. But Paul, like the rest, propagated Christianity as a history, telling the one story of the facts of Christ's life, superadding and emphasizing Christ's appearance and communications to himself. In his writings, largely doctrinal as they are, the well-known his-

tory is repeatedly assumed and affirmed to be true. The gospel of God, to which he is set apart as an Apostle, is the history

The gospel preached by St. Paul.

"concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead."

Romans i. 3, 4.

Towards the end of his life, he enjoins upon Timothy to remember, as if this was all he needed to recollect,

His exhortation to Timothy.

"that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel."

2 Timothy ii. 8.

Some years later, another advocate of the cause speaks to certain disciples

St. Peter's testimony.

"of the things which are reported to you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;" asserting, "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount."

1 Peter i. 12.

2 Peter i. 16, 17, 18.

Christianity was accepted and believed as a true history. One of the most conspicuous instances, as well as the most detailed, of the acceptance of this history, is that of Paul, whose own account of the way, and the reasons why, he was led to believe it, is recorded in his letters,—a collection of writings of which four at least are as well attested and as undisputed as are the letters of Cicero. In some

Christianity believed as history.

The testimony of Tacitus and Pliny to the existence of a great body of believers.

forty or fifty years after the death of Christ, the fact is noticed and recorded by secular historians (as Tacitus and Pliny), that a great body of believers in the story had spread themselves through the Roman Empire. All the means of information which we possess warrant the conclusion that Christianity was received by every one of these persons as a true history; and that every man who accepted baptism, gave his testimony, by this act, that he believed the story to be true.

The history an account of supernatural events.

The history proclaimed and accepted was, very largely, *a history of supernatural events.* We need not at present scrutinize the terms "supernatural" and "miraculous." All that we affirm is, that the very kernel and interest of this history, as well as its attractiveness and force, lay in what was believed to have been wrought by Divine power, and to have been incapable of being effected by any inferior agent or agency, whether of knowledge or skill. This was what Paul believed; this was what Paul's disciples were taught in Thessalonica and Corinth, in the provinces of Galatia, and in Rome,—all within some sixteen or twenty years after the Christian story was complete. That all this was believed is what Pliny and Tacitus confirm. The ablest and sturdiest of modern opponents of supernatural Christianity, F. C. Baur, says most explicitly:[1]

The testimony of F. C. Baur.

[1] Geschicht ed. christl. Kir. I. Abschn. p. 42.

"While the historical criticism has nothing to do with the inquiry what the resurrection was in fact, it must hold fast to the assertion, that, in the belief of the first disciples, it had become an established and incontrovertible certainty. In this belief, Christianity had gained a firm ground for its historic development. What must be presupposed as the essential foundation of this history is not the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, but the fact that it was believed that He had risen. However we may seek to explain this faith, the resurrection of Jesus had become to the first Christians a fact of conviction, and had for them all the reality of an historical fact.

Christianity a well-attested and accredited history.

We have considered Christianity thus far as a spoken or traditional history. Taking a step forward, we speak of it as written, and observe, The Christian history recorded in the New Testament is *a well-attested and accredited history*. We do not assert, at present, that it is a true history: we hope to prove that it is true. All that we now claim is, that it is as well attested as most histories, and far better than very many, by all the ordinary criteria by which such histories are tried and judged. We do not say that its events are not violently improbable when looked at as simply historical, and do not require a very extraordinary amount of evidence to counterbalance and overcome this improbability. But this additional evidence required is not simply historical. Of historical evidence, we have all in quantity and in quality which could be expected. We claim for the writers only the competence and honesty of ordinary narrators, and for their recorded history only the exactness and consistency of a

The historical evidence all that could be expected.

faithful narrative. We dismiss all questions of inspiration as premature. Of the recorded story, we assert that it is historically well attested; that its geography is accurate; its chronology is satisfactory; its descriptions of the state of society at that particular juncture of Jewish affairs—as we know it from other sources—are exceedingly truthful and graphic. Its singular record of a prophecy of Christ concerning the fate of Jerusalem fixes that discourse, whatever its import may be, as having been delivered before the event itself. The four writers agree with one another as well as, and even better than, we ought to expect. From their several narratives we can compile as good a continuous and chronological story as we can of any other life told by as many biographers. Paul's own history, as said to have been recorded by Luke, is wonderfully attested by the personal letters which contain so much of his biography. In short, from every source of evidence that is brought within our reach, we gain all the attestations in confirmation which any reasonable person would ask for. Some of these sources are wanting, we know. No observers of these events, who were not believers in the claims of Christ, have recorded their version of this history, unless we except Josephus. We concede that the Christian story is recorded only by Christian historians, —those who believed in its truth, and gave their

The different kinds of corroborative evidence.

The agreement of the four writers.

The accordance between the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles.

It is conceded that the Christian story is recorded only by Christian historians.

explanations of its events. We are sorry that we have not the witnesses on the other side; but, though they are not present, we can account for their absence. The affairs of the Jews were always ignored at the imperial city. The people were regarded by its philosophers and historians as the devotees of a baneful superstition, and as the natural enemies of human kind. Jesus, in their view, was but one more of the ever pestilent and seditious rabbis; and Christianity was one additional Jewish sect. Moreover, the story of Abraham and Moses and Joshua, the Odyssey and Iliad of this people, had for hundreds of years solicited the attention of Greek and Roman critics; but they had not condescended to honour it with a critical even though contemptuous judgment. The lyrics and prophecies of David and Isaiah had been within the reach of Greek and Roman scholars for centuries, but were practically unknown to them: why should they feel an interest in the reported discourses of Jesus and Paul?

The fact is easily accounted for.

Various reasons.

The non-believing Jews themselves, had they left many histories of those times, would have made little or no mention of the Christian sect. Only one such history was written,—that by Josephus,—and this is not a history of Jewish sects or of unadjusted Messianic claims, but a laudatory argument on the past greatness of the

Josephus the only contemporary Jewish historian.

Jewish nation, skilfully addressed to the ignorant prejudices of the Roman people. There was no place in it for any but the most casual notice of Jesus, and no call for any at all.

The field of attestation broader than is generally acknowledged.

But, though the field for attestation is narrowed to Christian witnesses and writers, it is broader than is usually acknowledged from the great variety of points within this field upon which a comparison can be instituted. The minuteness of statement, the artlessness of the record, and the very great number of confirmatory circumstances from the condition of the country and the times, are, in some sort, a compensation for the deficiency of attesting and accrediting witnesses outside the Christian society.

Corruptions of the Christian history.

The Christian history, as it was natural and almost necessary that it should be, was very *early exaggerated, caricatured, and corrupted* by a great variety of weak imitations, extravagant legends, incongruous additions, and designed mutilations.

The period when it was enacted.

The Christian history was enacted and reported at a fermenting period of the world's progress. Credulous superstition, bigoted intolerance, Oriental extravagance, and pretentious Gnosticism, were all

Various schools of thought and feeling existing.

active forces. The orthodox Jew, the ritualistic Pharisee, the cultured, or, as he would now be called, the scientific Sadducee, and the ascetic Essene, formed as many separate schools of thought and feeling. The Platonic Alexandrianism had

endeavoured to reconcile and combine Plato with Moses and the Prophets. The æsthetic culture of Athens and Ephesus, and the luxurious elegance of Corinth, each had its fixed types of taste and fashion. The practical, world-subduing, and world-organizing Roman, with his coarse tastes and cruel passions, presented another strong type of character. Into this seething mass of opinions, traditions, philosophies, and passions, the Christian history was thrown as a powerful and controlling force.

Athenian, Ephesian, Corinthian, and Roman influences.

We do not speak of its influence on the many whom it repelled and offended, we are concerned only with its effects upon many, who, in some sort, either accepted it as true, or sought to use its name and authority as sanctions to their ill-digested philosophy or their newly-contrived theories of religion. Others, whose religion was more fervent than their morality was careful, did not scruple to invent or to dream out apocryphical gospels, to indite weak epistles, and prefix to them venerable and honoured names. Others, in simple dogmatic impudence, headed so-called Christian sects, and led off parties in which every form of partisan violence and denunciation was employed. The teachings of the Old Testament, and the as yet unwritten traditions of the original witnesses of the life of Christ, were at first mutilated, misreported, and misapplied; and the writings of the last were treated with similar unfairness. The

The effects of Christianity on those who were in some way influenced by it.

Various abuses of it prevalent

The abuses began in the lifetime of the Apostles.

writings of Paul, of Peter, and of Luke, give abundant indications that all these movements had fairly begun in their times. That they should not only have begun, but have been developed in forms that were both extravagant and offensive, is no more than was natural, if we consider the times and the men with which Christianity had first to do. On the supposition that the Christian history was true, it is not strange that it gathered about itself—and in a certain sense attached to itself—a burden of heterogeneous elements which it only partially purified and subdued to its control.

It is not strange that Christianity gathered about itself heterogeneous elements.

When the crystalline nucleus is suddenly introduced into a liquid of manifold ingredients, there shoots out from it not only many a transparent and well-shaped gem, but there gathers about its beautiful kernel a cumbrous accumulation of half-formed, ill-shapen, earth-stained, and deformed appendages, all feeling its influence, but doing little credit to the power which has so imperfectly organized them. The Christian history, if true, ought not to be held responsible for the pious frauds or the impious caricatures which soon appeared in its train. By their number and character they illustrate the presence and power of some great force of actual personages and events such as this history records. Their falsehood and weakness do not attach to the truth under whose grand

Christianity not responsible for frauds and caricatures.

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and majestic shadow they sought for patronage and protection.

The Christian history is still believed to be a true history by the great mass of men over whom Christianity is a controlling power. The majority of those who call themselves Christian worshippers, every time they assemble renew the profession of their faith in the leading facts which this history records. They listen, perhaps, to some extract from the narrative whose interest never tires. Every first day of the week is but a renewed proclamation that Christ did, in fact, rise from the dead. Every Christian prayer and song repeats this faith. Every child in a Christian household is first bewildered, and then elevated and entranced by the sweet story of the Lord Christ, who was obedient to his parents, and dwelt in Nazareth, and, at twelve years old, was left alone in Jerusalem. Old age, when it tires of everything else, and has had enough of this life, is never tired of the story that records the words that were spoken by Jesus. The land where this history was enacted is clothed by the imagination with singular attractions, because the Christian history is believed to be true. There are, indeed, a few exceptions to this assertion. There is, here and there, one who denies the history to be true, and yet claims to derive from it a more subtle essence and a more

Profession of faith in Christian history constantly renewed.

The effect of the story of Jesus Christ on young and old.

quickening energy than those who believe in its literal reality. The history is to such a husk, which they regard as of little value if they seize and prize the kernel. It is a beautiful parable, of which the moral alone is the jewel. Of such it is no less than charitable to affirm, that perhaps they know not whether they have finally and for ever pronounced the story to be false; and it were no more than just to say, that the religious truth and moral life which they value as the only permanent truth of Christianity may be sustained for them indirectly through the faith of the multitudes who still believe the story to be true; from whose faith in the risen Jesus they draw the life and love, the self-denial and the self-sacrifice, the patience and hope, which stimulate and sustain their own abstract and intellectual ethics,—their so-called Christian but Christless creed. The thoughtful and refined who exclude Christ from history, and make Him only a symbol, cannot, if they would, escape the influences with which the past and present faith of others in this history pervade and penetrate every fibre of their being.

The religious truth and moral life of Christianity sustained for those who reject the history by the faith of those who believe the story.

It is questionable whether, if the Christian history were to cease to be believed, *the peculiar power of Christianity would not cease from the earth.* If the actual power of Christianity has, up to this time, been derived from a belief in this history as true, and if it is still thus sustained, the inference

The connection between faith in the history and the power of Christianity.

would seem to be legitimate, that, if this belief were withdrawn, the power of Christianity would be greatly weakened or wholly destroyed. The inference is purely historical: it is founded on observation of the working of forces which have been seen to exist, and to be followed by certain results.

A careful observation of facts compels the conclusion, that a hearty faith in the truth of the Christian history is attended with obedience to Christian principles and the exercise of those spiritual and ethical virtues which are distinctively Christian. The inference cannot be set aside by the reasoner who confines himself to history. He who claims that belief in the Christian history may be transient, while Christianity itself is permanent, must draw his proof from other than historic sources,—from the nature of Christianity as a system of truth. He must carry the discussion into a higher sphere. Into this sphere we are now prepared to enter.

Faith in the truth of Christian history attended with obedience to Christian principles.

2. We will next consider *Christianity as truth or doctrine.* Christianity is more than a history: it is also a system of truths. It enforces truth which might have been known without its aid, and it discovers truth which could not have been known without its communication. In both these relations it has been most efficient. In both, its agency has been indispensable.

Christianity a system of truths.

The facts of Christianity are doctrines.

The distinction has been made between the facts of Christianity and the truths of Christianity. But, viewed more closely, its facts are doctrines. Every event which its history records either is a truth, or suggests a truth, or expresses a truth, which man needs to assent to, or to put into practice. The appearance in history of such a person as Christ enforces the truth that God is love, and that He *so* loved the world. The healing of the sick by Him is a proclamation of the divine sympathy; the raising the dead, an assertion and an enforcement of a God mightier than nature, though nature is bound fast in the laws which no one save He that is mightier than herself can unloose. His own rising from the dead declares that He has the prerogative to take again the life which He relinquished. His ascension is an assertion of his power and right to rule; and the presence of the Parakletos, the Comforter, is the pledge that He cannot forget the earth which He once blessed with his presence, and the faithful men who trusted his word.

Christ was a teacher.

Christianity is also a doctrine in so far as Christ was a teacher. His followers were called disciples. He was continually plying them with parables and lessons concerning his new kingdom. When He sent them forth into the earth to tell the story of his life, that story included the many things which He had commanded them to be and to do.

He affirms,—

"To this end was I born, and for this end came I forth, that I might bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice." John xviii. 37.

The purpose of Christ's mission.

He also claimed for Himself a certain place in their faith and love; and here was a truth to be assented to. He called Himself, familiarly, the Son of man. He aspired without hesitation to the appellation of the Son of God. He called Himself the Light of the world, the Bread of Life, the Christ whom God had sent. Near the close of his life, He startled his disciples with the assertion, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Truths connected with the person, work, and death of Christ.

Wherever we begin,—with the person of Christ, the work of Christ, or the promises of Christ,—we find some truth suggested, confirmed, or enforced. If we begin with his person, we are led into authorized inferences or unauthorized speculations concerning God, and Christ's relation to God before, during, and after his appearance upon the earth. If we consider his work,—whether in his life or death, or both,—we are beset by inquiries, which we are forced to attempt to answer, concerning man's need; and these open the Christian truth concerning sin, and man's deliverance; and this unfolds to us the truth concerning redemption. If we reflect on the promises of Christ, the doctrines of the purifying Spirit, of perfected holiness, and of eternal life, claim our attention.

The doctrines connected with the promises of Christ.

The truths that of themselves leap out of the Christian history must necessarily lead to thoughtful inquiry for comparison, adjustment, and method.

The relations of the truths of Christianity.

The believing disciples, who received these truths with the history, would, of necessity, reflect on their mutual relations; would seek to define these relations with exactness and care, and to arrange the results in a coherent and consistent system.

The growth of creeds.

As a consequence and result of these efforts, there came into being, first, a brief symbol, or creed, the shortest and simplest of which must do something more than recite the leading facts of the history, and add some small admixture of doctrine. Next followed the catechism, in which the simplest propositions of what should be believed were prepared for the use of children and catechumens. Then

The systemisation of doctrine.

proceeded more or less elaborate systems of doctrine, in which the attempt was made carefully to define the truths of the creed, to reconcile them with one another and with the accepted knowledge of the times. Oftentimes this was done with an imperfect or a false philosophy, after an irrational method, and by proofs that were extracted out of the Scriptures by capricious, violent, and utterly illogical methods of interpretation. In this way, and by such a process, there grew out of Christianity as

Christian theology.

truth what is called Christian theology, which is a legitimate and necessary development of this truth after the methods of human science.

In this theology there has been much inexactness, many over-statements, an abundance of fanciful reasoning and imaginative deductions, arising out of the ignorance and error of the men who framed its several systems. Attack and defence have led to controversy; controversy, to bitterness of feeling; and uncharitable denunciation, to sectarian divisions and partisan bigotry.

Evils connected with it.

As a consequence of these perversions and excesses, Christian theology has often fallen into disrepute and dishonour, and it has been boldly questioned whether the attempt to reduce to definite statements what is known or knowable of Christian truth were not of itself certain to fail. However this may be, the attempt to do this is legitimate and necessary. Every generation renews it, and every society of Christian believers accepts some of its results.

Consequent disrepute into which it has fallen.

Notwithstanding all excesses and mistakes, Christianity is a series of truths upon which its power and dignity depend,—truths which it implies, enforces, or reveals. It implies the being and holiness of a personal God; it manifests Him as a forgiving Father, who sympathizes with and seeks to reclaim his wandering children; it implies and enforces the fact and the evil of personal guilt, which, if persisted in, must separate the guilty creature from the equitable and guiltless Creator; it manifests Christ as the Saviour from sin, with all its evils.

Christianity nevertheless is a series of truths.

The manifestation of Christ as the Saviour.

Among these evils, none is more prominent than the self-propagating and progressive power of sin, involving discouragement and despair. Against this it provides the promised aid and help of a Divine agency that encourages and assists the human spirit to confidence and victory. It enforces and reveals all these truths by the constant manifestation of the supernatural as an agency above the laws and above the forces of mere Nature, but which neither disturbs nor interrupts the harmony or order of a universe in which a personal God and impersonal law can never be in conflict.

The promised aid of the Holy Spirit.

3. *Christianity is a life.* Both as history and doctrine, it is given to mould the character and to serve the ends of life.

What Christianity is given for.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "Many other signs did Jesus; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."

John x. 10.

John xx. 30, 31.

Christianity requires that its history be believed as true. Its message to the world is,

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." "He that believeth . . . shall be saved."

John vi. 29. Mark xvi. 16.

But it is not satisfied with the most undoubting conviction that the history is true, and the boldest defence and confession of one's faith before infidel or Jew: it requires, also, that the truths which it declares shall be believed. Nor is it satisfied with the exactest and the most comprehensive orthodoxy

What it requires

of creed which goes no further. A correct theology considered by itself, and as a mere science, is no more acceptable than a correct theory of the heavens. Both history and theology are only valuable when applied to their use, and made to elevate and transform the life.

The example of Christ is given to be our pattern and inspiration. — The example of Christ.

"Hereunto were ye called, . . . that ye should follow his steps." — 1 Peter ii. 21.
"The disciple is not above his Master." — Matthew x. 24.

His work was designed to give that pardon and peace to the guilty which are life within the ribs of death; to add help and courage, which are life begun a second time in hope. His promises assure his followers of a life to come which is worthy to be called eternal. Every believing man who has commenced the Christian life says, "This is life indeed: I have never truly lived before." The more completely and consistently a believer lives his human life as animated and controlled by Christ, the more intense and satisfactory is his life on earth; and, when he emerges beneath those portals which open the blessed land to his amazed senses, he exclaims with completed satisfaction, "This is eternal life!" — His work. — His promises. — Eternal life.

Christianity is not only life to the individual, but it gives life to human society. It refines its manners; it perfects its civilization; it renders its laws more just, and their administration more perfect; it fosters and popularizes education; it — Christianity and human society.

The ethics of Christianity.

furnishes inspiration to art, and taste to its admirers. Its ethics are broad enough to meet every exigency, and minute enough to let none escape. They are progressive enough to keep pace with any advance of culture or civilization, and tolerant enough to be charitable to every offence that comes of ignorance or barbarism. Its comprehensive, final aim is the moral and spiritual perfection of the race. To this, as its sole and controlling end, its history and its truth are completely subjected; from this they derive all their importance and their interest.

Thus far have we considered these three conspicuous aspects of Christianity as actually coexisting in the same religious system.

Proof that Christianity is superhuman.

II. We proceed now to inquire how far they go to prove that the system in which they are united is superhuman in its features, and supernatural in its origin.

1. We begin with *Christianity as a history.* The matchless superiority of this history is manifest, if we consider its matter. On the supposition that this story might possibly be true, it is ideally perfect,—so perfect as to strike us as superhuman. It being conceded that the incarnation and the resurrection are possible, we are ready to say at once, that the history is in every particular what we might expect or ought to require it to be.

The story ideally perfect and superhuman, if true.

The life of Jesus, if He were the Son of God, could not have been improved, whether we regard Him as Reformer, Teacher, Example, or God manifest in the flesh. In his modest reserve respecting his origin, his higher nature, his destiny, and his kingdom; in his skill and patience with his disciples; in his mingled condescension and rebuke; in his conflicts with his bigoted and sanctimonious antagonists; in his conduct at Lazarus' tomb, and towards Lazarus' sisters; in his trial before Jewish and Roman rulers; in his parting scene with his panic-stricken followers; in his majestic yet agonizing submission to death; in his kingly attitude upon the cross; in his lonely resurrection; in the reserve and dignity of his subsequent intercourse with his disciples; there is all that we require in such a history, if it could be conceived to be possible, and attested as true.

Impossible to improve the life of Jesus if He were the Son of God.

It is sufficiently attested, provided its matter be accepted as possible. The superhuman character of the matter of the history is, in a certain sense, rendered historically probable from the difficulty of accounting for the origination of this history unless it were true. The invention of such a character is itself a superhuman product which the historical critic cannot account for on purely natural principles, because, in avoiding one form of the supernatural, he must resort to another. The supernatural which he would shun on the one

The story sufficiently attested if accepted as possible.

The invention of the character of Christ incredible.

hand is the existence of the reality: but, in explaining this away, he supposes an hypothesis which is even more difficult to receive; *i.e.*, he accepts a supernatural which is still more incredible,—the fact that it was invented.

The natural and the supernatural in the history inseparable.

We notice, also, the weaving together of the natural and the supernatural in a union so intimate, and by arts so dexterous, that the two cannot easily be separated. The historical critic has sought again and again to eliminate the supernatural from the natural, and what he calls the probable; but he has never done it with success, so skilfully are the two intertwined.

The effects wrought on human events by the force of the Christian story unparalleled.

Then, again, the belief in the history has wrought with mighty power upon the course of human events. If the historical critic cannot admit the miraculous into the chain of acknowledged historic causes, he is at least competent to assert two facts: first, that no other effects like those wrought by the force of the Christian story were ever wrought by any other known natural or historic causes, or any combination of such causes; and second, that it is not easy (indeed it is impossible) to explain how the belief in the supernatural mission and resurrection of Christ could originate, and act from the first with such potent energy by any historic or natural causes. We notice, next, its superhuman combination with doctrines, and its superhuman subservience to duty and life.

The superhuman subservience of Christianity to duty and life.

Concerning the superiority of this history as an illustration of religious truth, we need only refer to the fact, that many who reject it as a true history, concede and contend that it came into being by the force of doctrine; that it was the product and growth of the absolute religion, which, in the mind of Jesus or the minds of his admiring disciples,—in either or in both,—wrought out for itself this supernatural history as a perfect allegory, a romantic dream symbolizing truth, a myth, or a legend; and then accepted or proclaimed it as true because it was so appropriate as a symbol. Of the life of Jesus, it is universally conceded that the proverb is eminently appropriate, "If the story is not true, it is well invented."

The history as an illustration of religious truth.

As a means of ethical enforcement and inspiration, this history is equally extraordinary. No examples of human duty and perfection have ever yet been furnished which are at once so instructive and so moving as those which this history records. No stories of human duty and self-sacrifice are more instructive and more animating than the stories which Christ taught in parable and precept, and Himself enacted in his life. The parables and stories of the Good Samaritan, of the unjust steward, of the wise and foolish virgins, of the woman that was a sinner, of the unforgiving creditor; the Sermon on the Mount; above all, the Christ who healed the sick, and who counselled and spake forgiveness;

The Christian history as a means of ethical enforcement and inspiration.

Parables and stories of the Gospels.

who pleased not Himself; who went about doing good; who loved his own to the end; who prayed at Gethsemane; who meekly endured Caiaphas and the frantic Sanhedrim; who did not smite the treacherous Judas; who looked so lovingly upon the faithless Peter; who prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them," and commended his mother to the beloved disciple,—are all teachings and enforcements of duty which neither history nor fable in the literature of the world has as yet surpassed, and which are more effective than any and all other precepts and motives which the world as yet has witnessed or produced.

Unsurpassed in the literature of the world.

2. We take up, next, *Christianity as truth.* What are its chief or essential truths we shall not stay to inquire. For our argument it would be sufficient to assert that it both teaches and enforces the personality of God, the responsibility of man, and the certainty and importance of a future life. We believe that it also teaches more than this, making prominent the guilt and helplessness of man, and the need and the provision of Christ as a redeemer; and that from these truths, and what they involve, are derived the most convincing arguments for its superhuman origin. Our argument has full force, however, for those who assume that it teaches less.

The argument from Christianity as truth.

What we chiefly insist on is, not that the knowledge or the communication of these truths is

The communication of the truths superhuman.

superhuman; but the fact that Christianity teaches such truths solely by means of history, and solely for an ethical end, evinces a supernatural skill and superhuman wisdom.

The method and end of the teaching of truth by Christianity evince supernatural skill and superhuman wisdom.

These truths are not taught as a science either in form or method. There are no scholastic propositions, and few logical arguments, in the teachings of Christianity. There is little abstract language, and few precise definitions. The teachings are usually simple and comprehensive utterances; and the arguments, with few exceptions, are level to the common understanding. Many of the declarations are couched in bold and striking figures. Not a few of the truths are stated and brought home by simple parables. Many are declared in a language that is more striking even than parable or metaphor, and enforced by considerations which no eloquence of speech could urge,—the language of deeds that convince and arouse, the argument of facts that impress and win. The pitying and rebuking Saviour, the raised Lazarus, the crucified and risen Christ, express and enforce truths as no teacher in any other school has ever expressed and enforced them.

The teachings simple and comprehensive, and level to the common understanding.

And yet, in the truths that Christ uttered and enacted there are the materials for extensive systems of scientific thought. Most of these truths are capable of taking a place in the most intricate and profound of sciences. Now, what is remark-

The truths uttered by Christ contain materials for extensive systems of scientific thought.

The truths of Christianity not given in scientific form.

able in Christianity is, that these germinant and productive scientific truths are not given at all in any scientific form, but are either stated in simple and popular diction, or are left to be inferred from the tremendous facts which suggest them. In other words, what is most extraordinary in Christianity, what is itself superhuman, and well might prove the system to be divine, is not so much the doctrines that it makes known, as the fact that these doctrines are taught by history.

Only a divine forecast could have so adapted them to the wants of all men.

In this is made conspicuous an adaptation to the wants of all men, in all conditions of existence, such as none but a divine forecast could have provided. Scarce a human being is so simple, scarce a generation is so uncultured, to whom some fact of this history may not suggest and enforce its leading truths. No individual, and no generation, has as yet been so cultured, that these truths have not served as problems and suggesters of whole systems of philosophic inquiry.

The truths taught and enacted for practical effect alone.

But it is not intimated that such results are possible. The truths are taught and enacted for practical effect alone. If God is revealed as a Spirit, it is that we may worship Him in spirit and in truth; not that the speculations of mere curiosity respecting the possibility of an Infinite Spirit, and of his relations to the finite, may be excited or put to rest. If men are convinced of guilt and danger, it is not that they may speculate

about either, but that they may repent and be reformed. If Christ is set forth to them as a Deliverer, it is not that they may perfect a science respecting his person or his work, but that they may believe and obey Him.

The truths vindicate and justify the supernatural element in the history of Christianity.

Again: the truths which Christianity reiterates and enforces vindicate and justify the supernatural element in its history. They are its only possible vindication. Separate from these truths, this part of the story is so highly improbable, as, for all practical purposes, to be viewed as incredible; but connected with such truths, and judged by the importance and necessity that these truths should be revealed and impressed, the supernatural, in the form and manner in which it is made known, becomes not only credible, but probable. Being thus established, when it forms a part of a history that is otherwise well attested, it not only removes all objections to the reception of the history, but it strengthens it as a history. When, in addition, the presence of the supernatural, thus accredited as true history, furnishes the only satisfactory explanation of events which are known to be historically true,—events the most extraordinary, wide-reaching, and long-enduring of any known to history, —events which are confessedly difficult to be explained by any known historic force,—the supernatural borrows confirmation from, as well as furnishes the explanation to, the whole course of

Connected with these truths the supernatural becomes

The presence of the supernatural furnishes the only satisfactory explanation of events known to be historically true.

modern civilization and the history of Christendom and the Christian Church. To faith in miracle, doctrines and history must combine. In Christianity, doctrine and history do combine, so as to compel the belief that the Christian miracles are possible and real.

Combination of miracle, doctrine, and history.

A personal God assumed by Christianity.

Christianity assumes and affirms as truth a personal God, who is above the Nature which He creates and animates, and with respect to which He is Himself supernatural. He that believes in such a God must believe that a miracle is possible, even in the extremest form in which it may appear, —the form of original creation. Christianity, moreover, assumes and declares that the moral necessities of men are such as to justify the use of miraculous agency. These necessities are various. The human race need to be impressed with the reality of God's being and agency. They need to be assured of the reality and earnestness of his moral rule as well as of his readiness to forgive and to purify. They need to be confronted with one of their kind who has died and lived again. They require that all these truths should be enforced to their wonder as facts of startling energy, and should be warmed for their hearts by the glow of divine affection. These necessities are justifying reasons for the use of supernatural energy. Our faith in the breach of nature's laws on extraordinary occasions, for a sufficient end, is, in principle, iden-

It assumes that the moral necessities of men are such as to justify the use of supernatural agency.

Our faith in the breach of natural law for a sufficient end, one with our faith in the uniformity of law on common occasions.

tical with our faith in the uniform and inflexible observance of these laws on occasions that are common. In the same faith, we require that miracles should not often be repeated; that, having fulfilled their design in introducing new facts and new truths and a new force into human history, it is neither to be expected nor desired that they should be either cheap, commonplace, or contemptible.

Faith requires that miracles should not be often repeated.

Christianity, then, as truth, proves Christianity to be superhuman. Christianity as history declares and enforces Christianity as doctrine; and Christianity as doctrine makes credible Christianity as a history. Thus whatever independent and separate claims Christianity may assert as a history are made doubly strong by the separate claims of Christianity as doctrine. The union of the two more than doubles the strength of either: the mutual dependence of the two gives to their union an organic power.

The summary of argument hitherto.

3. We pass next to *Christianity as a life.* This concerns three particulars,—the aim or ideal of life, the rules for attaining this ideal, and the inspiration which impels to its realization. Here we notice that the ideal of a perfect human life and a perfect human being, proposed by Christianity, is more comprehensive, more elevated, and more symmetrical, than any that was distinctly conceived by man before. It is an ideal which it has not

The Christian ideal of a human life

The ideal of the ancients.

been easy to appreciate and reach since it was taught and exemplified by Christ Himself. The ancients thought very earnestly and, in a sense, very honestly upon this ideal. They sought to know what was involved in the conception of a perfect human being; but their wisest sages reached nothing higher than the general and rather abstract result, that it involved a life according to the nature of man, or according to the wisdom of the gods. What such a life purported they did not so clearly discern. They taught,

What it involved.

indeed, that for the man himself it involved self-control first and chiefest of all, in order that neither the appetites nor the passions should disturb the inward serenity of the well-poised man. Next, so far as others were concerned, it required justice; principally that the social harmony might not be disturbed; that the organized state, the outward symbol and enlargement of the individual man, might always retain its well-balanced equi-

The Stoics.

librium. The Stoics, at the latest period of their development, looked beyond the state, and had some dawning sense, in the abstract, of a fellow-man as an equal, and of the state as a more limited reflex of the greater commonwealth of the human race. But no ancient school, nor all the ancient schools united, had reached the conception of that

The crowning grace of Christian character.

self-sacrificing love which is the crowning and comprehensive grace of Christ's perfect man, and

of the easy subjection of the passions and appetites to the controlling spirit of this love. The grateful and loving charity which Christ proposed, and which Paul enjoined, had no place in the world's ideals of perfection, except in the Jewish and Christian schools; and it was only in the latter that it was consistently developed and adequately conceived.

Charity in the Jewish and Christian schools.

If the ancient systems failed in their general conception of human perfection, much more did they fail in the special directions which they laid down for its realization. The particular virtues which Christianity recognizes so positively and uncompromisingly—as humility, patience, modesty, tolerance, sympathy, forgiveness of injury, kindness to those who persecute and insult us, and even prayer for them—were scarcely conceived of as virtues by the most advanced of the ancients; or, if some one or two were conceived of as good, it was rather as signs of a serene and well-poised nature than as the varied manifestations of divine charity. The self-sufficing happiness that is connected by Christ with losing the life for the good of others was not so much as dreamed of till Christ proposed it as the reward of all his disciples, and sanctioned and hallowed it by his life and his death.

The special Christian virtues scarcely conceived of as virtues by the ancients.

If we look at ethics as a science, or a well-grounded and comprehensive system of special

The ethics of the New Testament unapproached by the best Pagan systems.

duties, we find that neither in the profundity nor the reach of their principles do any or all of the best of the pagan systems approach in point of excellence to the system that may be derived from the apparently disjoined teachings of the New Testament. Neither the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle nor the *De Officiis* of Cicero present so many profound scientific principles which provide for so many particular duties, or admit of such wide and varied applications as the unstudied and unarranged sayings of Christ and St. Paul. The comprehension of all human duties under two rules—each a different application of love—is an example of generalization which, in matter and form, is beyond any attainment of the ancient ethics. The requirement that this love should control the inner man, and become the spring of all the special affections, and the application of it to the most trying of duties, at any cost, was so original as to incur the astonished derision of the schools. The duty of toleration for differences of moral judgments in respect to external action was not so much as dreamed of, either for its practical wisdom or for its scientific value. The sentences of Epictetus and the meditations of Antoninus, in their practical spirit, are stiff, constrained, and selfish, when contrasted with the easy, gentle, plastic, and loving temper that enlivens and warms the practical philosophy of the Gospels and Epistles.

The twofold law of love a generalization beyond the attainment of ancient ethics.

Toleration for differences of moral judgments undreamed of by them.

Whence came this system of ethics, unsurpassed for philosophical and practical excellence, which is yet without philosophical form, which has never yet been outgrown, which seems so simple and obvious, but which has proved so hard to comprehend, and so much harder to apply? If it did not claim to be from God, if the Great Teacher had asserted for Himself claims no higher than were reported of Socrates or Numa, we should not find it so very irrational to say that, in some sense, He was superhuman in his knowledge of human duty, simply because his intuitions upon the subject allow no comparison in their number, their reach, and their consistency, with those which have been attained by any other human being. But, when He Himself claims a superhuman position and authority, how shall we treat this direct and positive claim, which had almost been suggested of itself, had it not been asserted by Him? Shall we believe it the less because it is self-asserted? or shall we deny that He knows what He would say of Himself, when He asserts truths so many and so profound concerning human duty and the supreme good? Shall we say that He is false in what He says of Himself? How can we, when He points to his teachings, and declares with such serene and quiet confidence,

The superhuman origin of Christian ethics.

Christ's knowledge of human duty superhuman.

His claim to superhuman position and authority must be admitted.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away"; "I know whence I came, and whither I go"; "Though I bear record of Myself, My record is true"?

Matthew xxiv. 35. John viii. 14

But we do not rest our argument here. It is because these unmatched ethics are also enforced by the Christian doctrines, and vitalized by the Christian history, that their superiority is manifestly supernatural and divine. The duties which Christianity teaches are all directly enjoined by its truths. Every truth which Christianity declares is also a motive to the performance of some duty. What God is, and what God wills; what God is now doing, and what He will do in the future state of being; what man is in his needs and guilt, and what God has done, and how He feels in respect to his help and his pardon,—are every one of them powerful reasons why man should seek after ethical perfection. The comprehensive applications of its whole moral code is—

The connection between the truths and duties of Christianity.

Matthew v. 48. "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Matthew v. 44, 45. "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you: . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good."

Ephesians vi. 5, 6. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, . . . as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

1 Thessalonians v. 6. "Ye are all the children of light: . . . therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober."

Titus ii. 11. 12, 13. "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Christian truths as motives to Christian duties.

There is not a single truth which Christianity reveals which is not also a motive to Christian

duty. The Christian ethics, thus re-enforced, are not only a system of rules, they are also an aggregate of motives. Christianity does not simply give wise and ample directions of what we are to do; but it furnishes us the moving power. It does not merely command and forbid, but it enkindles inspiration. Hence is it that Christianity is a life. It is because the Christian ethics are religious and spiritual that they outshine every other. The ancient systems had no such excellence as this. It was only in the most general way that the theology of the ancients aided its morality. While there was, doubtless, an undefined faith that the heavens and the gods were on the side of the right, this general faith was contradicted and weakened by most of the details which the prevailing theology taught of the character and administration of the gods; and thus religion was not only dissevered from morality, but was often its deadliest enemy. What is sometimes loosely urged against the Christian ethics, that they are also religious, is their completing excellence. They not only carefully enjoin duties to God, and make them spiritual, but they derive the motive to all duties whatever from what we know of God. The ancient ethics, whether Platonic or Stoic, derived the matter and the authority of their precepts from the nature of man as fulfilling the designs, and as thus honouring the wisdom, of the higher powers. They never

Christian ethics an aggregate of motives

Christian ethics religious and spiritual.

The connection between theology and morality among the ancients weakened by the character and administration of the gods.

The ancient ethics derived their matter and authority from the nature of man as fulfilling the designs of the higher powers.

The nature of Christian ethics.

invested virtue with the interest which it has when regarded as the rendering of a grateful service to the loving Father in heaven, as a voluntary imitation of the divine perfections, as a cheerful and confiding submission to the divine appointments, as an honest and steady obedience to God's expressed will, or as a life of tender devotion to the redeeming Saviour. The Christian ethics do all this, and even more.

Christian morality derives vitality from Christian history.

As Christian truth gives its morality enforcement and inspiration, Christian history gives it vitality. We not only receive the precepts of our Teacher, but we read his life as our example. He not only instructs us as to what we should be and do by precepts and words, but He exemplifies it by what He Himself was and did. Christ not only declares what it is to be a perfect man, but He was Himself a perfect man, and, in being such, made His precepts concrete and intelligible by acting them out, as well as warm and winning by showing Himself the friend of those whom He would guide. The Great Teacher in the Christian school is Himself all that He tells his pupils that they ought to be. He never says "Go," but always "Come." Nay, He does not so much say "Come" as Himself performs that which He desires we should imitate:

Christ is the perfect man.

He performs what He would have us imitate.

Matthew xx. 28.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed

your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. The servant is not greater than his lord." John xiii. 14.

The fact that the life which Christianity teaches and inspires is enforced by all its truths, and is also re-enforced by its matchless history, increases immensely the improbability that it should be of human origin; and increases the probability in the same proportion that it is supernatural and divine. The probability of the supernatural and divine character of Christianity increased by the connection of its truths, history and life.

Here we end our argument. We restate it thus: Christianity claims to be a supernatural product; and it enforces its claim by its superhuman excellence as a history, a doctrine, and a life. Each one of these features, considered alone, substantiates this claim; the union of these three features in the same system makes the argument stronger; the inter-dependence of the three, each giving and receiving strength from the other, unites them in an organic union, which makes the argument invincible and complete. It is indeed *a threefold cord, which is not quickly broken.* Restatement of the argument.

III. This conclusion is confirmed by a review of the attempts which are made by the rejecters of supernatural Christianity to dispose of each of these heads of proof. Confirmation of the conclusion

1. Not a few of those who reject Christianity as a history do it by first rejecting Christianity as a system of truth. But, in rejecting Christianity as

The argument against the supernatural in Christianity.

a doctrine, they are unable to explain it as a history. The argument against the supernatural in the history often takes one of the following forms: A miracle is impossible because the laws of Nature are inviolable: therefore no record of history, however amply fortified and attested, can be believed, if it declares that a miracle has in fact been wrought. This position is taken by the Pantheists of every school and shade of opinion, whether of the gross or literal school, who make the Deity, or the Absolute, one with the essence or the forces of the universe, or the more refined logico-metaphysical type, who exalt law as higher than God, and practically subject Him to fate.

The Pantheistic position.

The position of those who admit the theoretical possibility of miracles.

The second form is that assumed by those who so far deny or weaken the truths of Christianity as to bring them within the easy and practical reach of mankind without the enforcement of miracles or the agency of the supernatural Christ. These last admit that miracles are theoretically possible; but they deny any sufficient occasion for their occurrence. They "cannot believe such facts on such evidence," because, in their view, there is no sufficient reason, in the truths that are made known, or in the necessities of those to whom they are taught, to justify so remarkable a deviation from the fixed and eternal laws of the universe.

On either supposition, the history is rejected for doctrinal or scientific reasons; and it is very pro-

perly rejected if either of these reasons holds good. If a miracle is impossible in the nature of things, or if there is not a sufficient reason why a miracle should be wrought, every narrative which records a miracle is incredible. We do not object to the inference, nor to its application to the Christian history, if its premises are true: we only call attention to the arguments on which this history is questioned or denied.

The inferences of unbelief admissible if its premises are true.

The conclusion to which a process of reasoning conducts may often lead a man to question the correctness of some one or more of the premises. A conclusion which it is very difficult to explain on any other than one supposition may well make us pause before we accept it in the form of a logical inference from some assumed datum. The rejecter of the supernatural Christian history is not released from all further responsibility because he chooses to assert that a miracle is impossible, or that the alleged occasion does not justify its employment. The Christian history exists, and is well attested as a history. How came it into being if its matter is not true? How came it to be believed by so many intelligent and honest men, and with such force and energy of faith as to gain large accessions, at a rapid rate, against such fearful odds of opposition, and at such costly sacrifices? Did Christ believe that He was the Messias, the Teacher of the ages, the future Master of human thought, the perpetual

Christian history must be explained.

Questions which must be answered.

Ruler of human opinion, the Judge coming in the clouds of heaven, the King of a spiritual kingdom which was to begin like leaven, and to extend, like leaven, to the end of time? If He did not believe these claims, how came any one to believe them, and especially to put them into his mouth, and to connect them with a character, which, whether a fact or a fancy, was so truthful and perfect as his? Did Christ rise from the dead? If not, how came the disciples to believe that He did, and so early, and with such assured confidence as not to be able to refrain from asserting it? Or, to sum up all in one, how came the Christian history to be first reported, and then to be written, if it were wholly or partially false? These are questions which no man can avoid the responsibility of attempting to answer, by simply asserting that his philosophy forbids him to believe that the miraculous is possible, or, in this particular case, was required. They are questions which it is very difficult to answer on the theory that denies or dispenses with the supernatural. Strauss laboured earnestly and long to construct and defend a plausible theory of the origin of this history from his doctrinal basis. Baur laboured with greater learning to defend another. Renan has tried another, very unlike that of either. Schenkel has essayed another. But this history still lifts up its calm and quiet voice, and points to the position which its facts took so early, and the force which

Difficulty or answering them on the negative theory.

Different answers.

they have exerted so long, as forces and effects which are hard to be accounted for without the supernatural. The imagination of a quick-minded thinker may suggest a theory which will satisfy a hasty inspection of the facts. A reader of the histories of religion will find no difficulty in suggesting a few parallels to the character and claims of Jesus, as in Socrates and other ethical and religious geniuses, around whose names and doctrines has been gathered an extraordinary splendour; but the difficulty is obstinate, that the parallels do not readily strike cool and honest heads, and somehow do not satisfy and hold the mind. The points of resemblance are made the most of; the points of difference in kind and degree are quietly omitted. Meantime this same history is as attractive and as powerful as ever to those who read it with open mind. It even manages to hold with a strange fascination of unsolved mystery the men to whom it is an enigma, a splendid myth, a dream of elevated aspirations, or a very pardonable exaggeration. They draw near to it again and again, still fixing upon it their bewildered gaze, ever seeking and never finding how this sole and singular phenomenon, this puzzle and problem of historic criticism, this offence to what is called culture and science, may somehow or other be satisfactorily disposed of.

Parallels to the character and claims of Jesus.

The parallels unsatisfactory.

The attractions and power of Christian history.

Whatever else may be true of this great ques-

The claims of Christian history not yet set aside.

tion, we may confidently assert that the demonstrated or assumed impossibility of the supernatural has not yet set aside the claims of the Christian history as history.

2. Others assail Christianity as truth from the side of history. They tell us that the supernatural vanishes from the page of all history when it is read by the instructed and penetrating eye of the new historical criticism. It is not requisite, they say, that we raise any questions of philosophy or theology; it is sufficient for us to read the Christian story as critics, to be forced to reject the supernatural in it. They read it thus:

The new historical criticism.

How it reads the Christian story.

"It is universally observed that, as men become enlightened, they dismiss all belief in the miraculous. The stories of ghosts and fairies are abandoned when the race leaves its childhood. Legends and myths are uniformly connected with great heroes, and great lawgivers, and great religious geniuses, by their admiring or reverent successors and disciples. Later generations do not honour these personages the less when they divest their memory and their names of such adventitious honours and attractions, and render them the rational homage which is due to their well-grounded claims. The analogies of history itself force us to conclude that the miraculous in the Christian history is false, and justify us in explaining this part of the narrative by some agency of high moral and religious significance; in this case by the personal force of Christ, who was a great moral and religious power in his generation, —so great, that around Him there gathered extraordinary conceptions and beliefs of his divine original and power: or perhaps they were wakened and accepted in his own fervid imagination."

This is the attempted solution of the history on the grounds of history alone.

Let us concede that it may be correct, if we limit our view to Christianity as history. But Christianity is more than a story of miraculous deeds: it is a system of truths relating to God and man, to holiness and sin, to moral ruin and moral recovery. Some of these truths are taught by words; others are revealed and enforced by deeds. These truths not only meet more wants, and satisfy more longings, and still more fears, and awaken more hopes, and diffuse more satisfying peace, than any other truths that ever were uttered in a form so popular as would seem to be the product of consummate art, were it not the natural outgrowth of unconscious simplicity. They are so wrought into the structure of this touching history as to transfigure its narrations into a series of parables and symbols, each of which seems invented for the sole purpose of illustrating these truths. They are so enforced by the most affecting manifestations of sincerity and tenderness as to have come home to the souls of myriads of simple and unlettered human beings with constraining power. They have been the springs of the best actions, and the inspiration of the best lives, of multitudes of human beings, even when they have been encumbered with the metaphysics of the schools, and deformed by unworthy adjuncts of superstition, and corrupted through base admixtures of human invention. Whence came this wonderful system of truths?

Christianity a system of truths.

The truths wrought into the structure of the history.

Questions to be answered.

Questions continued.

Who contrived its well-adjusted adaptations to the human soul? How was it so dexterously wrought into the history, and expressed so perfectly, so aptly, and so powerfully, by the persons and events which it describes? Let it be granted that the miracle of deeds may be explained away from the history. How can the miracle of doctrine be explained which springs forth from every page of it; which makes "the gospel the power of God unto salvation;" and which justifies the promise, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God?" To these questions, and the problems which they suggest, historical analogies about a necessary subsidence of the faith in the miraculous with the advance of reason and science, and warnings against excess of credulity, cannot avail except with minds that show the extreme of credulity in the facile acceptance of the extemporized surmises of rash critics, the brilliant parallels of daring romancers, and the cool assertions of positive dogmatists.

Romans i. 16.

John vii. 12.

Christianity as a life must be accounted for.

Christianity as a life also must be accounted for and explained, even if the history is a gross exaggeration or a falsehood. A new style of character comes into the world at the date of this history and the enforcement of these doctrines,—a type of human feeling and action which was never known before in such purity and energy; which goes from heart to heart, and city to city,

like a life-giving breeze; which hallows the family, suppresses human passion, and purifies society; which makes life sacred, and death triumphant; which introduces into all human relations principles and motives that have wrought and still work like leaven, and the power of which to work in new forms of society, and to impel to every kind and degree of human progress, shows no tokens of exhaustion or limitation. How is it that the reality and the springs of Christianity as a life are to be explained? Is it said, the great central Teacher dreamed the false history was true, and taught and acted these ingenious and powerful doctrines concerning God and man in some ecstatic maze, and inspired humanity with this new life under the excitement of a divine madness,—an inspiration which is akin to the insanity of a great genius? But this genius was a genius of religion, and this implies reverence and self-distrust; a genius in morality, and this prescribes cool and self-scrutinizing integrity, and rigorous and exact veracity.

How is Christianity as a life to be explained

An incredible explanation

3. Others assail Christianity as a life; aiming in this way to weaken or destroy its authority as truth, and its credibility as a history. Their argument is effective if it can be made good; for if the ethical and spiritual result for which Christianity professes to have been given is not good, and wholly good, there is no reason that God should

Christianity assailed as a life.

The real meaning of the attacks.

provide it by superhuman methods, or that man should receive it as a supernatural gift. While its life may have been good for its time, and even better than any other, yet, if it is not good for all time, it must give way to that which is better. The machinery by which it was introduced must likewise have been evolved by an agency which was neither divine nor supernatural. Such is the real intent and bearing of all these attacks upon Christianity as a life.

It is difficult to comprehend them all under a brief description. They naturally group themselves under the three classes of attacks upon the Christian ideal of life, upon the Christian rules of life, and the Christian motives to life. By a few writers, all these features of the Christian ethics are assailed.

Three classes of attacks.

We ought for a moment to notice those philosophers who hold any so-called scientific views of the nature of the human soul, or of the sources of human knowledge, which are inconsistent with human responsibility, and consequently with any scientific doctrine of ethical or spiritual life. All materialists come under this class; so do all philosophical necessitarians; and so do those who make morality to be a mere result of the laws of association, or the factitious product of psychical development, whether by means of brain growths and molecular accretions, or under the operation of growths and conjunctions that are purely psychical.

Scientific views of the human soul inconsistent with human responsibility.

Those do the same who make moral and spiritual feeling to be dependent solely on social conditions. Mr. Huxley, Mr. John Stuart Mill, Professor Alexander Bain, and Mr. Herbert Spencer, must of necessity reject all Christian ideals of duty and of living, because they provide for no morality that is not factitious and conventional.

Depreciation of Christian ethics.

We have first to do with those, who, in the name of a so-called better ethics and more elevated life, depreciate or dishonour the ethics or the life which Christianity would effect as the final result of its doctrine and history. Some do this by asserting that Christianity is content with an orthodox creed, or an assent to the truth of a certain history; that it relies upon these as the arbitrary conditions or means of what it calls salvation, to the neglect or depreciation of ethical goodness. To all such representations or insinuations we reply, that those who make them have not derived their conceptions from Christ and the New Testament. Whatever may be the one-sided representations of so-called Christian teachers or Christian believers, or whatever may be the practical impressions conveyed by the abuses or corruptions of Christianity, these views of Christianity are so far from being authorized by Christ, that they are carefully disclaimed and most emphatically denounced by Him as false and dangerous.

Such views not authorised by Christ and the New Testament

It is also objected, that the Christian ethics are

Alleged one-sidedness of Christian ethics.

one-sided, because they attach exclusive or at least an excessive importance to spiritual or religious duties to the neglect of the duties between man and man: in other words, it is said that Christianity accepts religion, and places too little emphasis upon morality. The better system of religion which is to take its place is thus described:

> "There will be a new church founded on moral science,—at first cold and naked, a babe in a manger again, the algebra and mathematics of ethical law, the church of men to come, without shawms or psaltery or sackbut; but it will have heaven and earth for its beams and rafters, science for symbol and illustration; it will fast enough gather beauty, music, picture, poetry. Was never stoicism so stern and exigent as this shall be. It shall send man home to his central solitude, shame these social, supplicating manners, and make him know that much of the time he must have himself to his friend. He shall expect no co-operation, he shall walk with no companion. The nameless Thought, the nameless Power, the super-personal Heart,—he shall repose alone on that."[1]

The ground of this misconception.

The ground for this misconception is found in this, that Christianity teaches that the duties from man to God are as binding and as sacred as the duties from man to man, and that it derives the most powerful motives to duty in both directions from the presence and the will of God. We grant that the ethics of Christianity are, in both of these senses, religious and spiritual. We not only concede that this is so, but we insist that this is one of their characteristic excellences, and the prime condition of their superior efficiency. But, in exalting religion, they do not depress morality be

[1] R. W. Emerson: *Conduct of Life*, vi.

tween man and man in respect to its sacredness or its comparative importance. The satire and denunciations of Christ against those religionists who would dispense with morality are as discriminating and as severe as any which we find in any subsequent writer or in any modern sage.

The perfection of Christ's example called in question.

A few attempts have been made to call in question the perfection of the example of Christian morality which is furnished in the life of Christ. We are told by Mr. F. W. Newman, that, if we would subject this life to as cool and critical a revision as that to which Mr. Grote has subjected the life of Socrates, we should discover manifold blemishes. Mr. Parker and others have ventured to suggest some signs of heat of temper and impatience. We have only to ask that those who read the life of Christ should treat Him with the fairness, if they cannot with the fervour, which Mr. Grote bestows upon Socrates. Mr. Grote, usually the coolest of critics, is warmed into a mood of almost fervid admiration, notwithstanding the exceptions which he takes to the well-rounded perfection of the Athenian teacher. Let those who study Christ historically, endeavour first of all, to understand the circumstances in which He was placed; let them remember, also, that the descriptions and records are incomplete. By observing these rules, they will find no difficulty in rising to a higher fervour of feeling at this wonder of self-denial, love

The life of Christ should be read with fairness.

An effort should be made to understand His circumstances.

and truth—the Christ of the evangelists—than Socrates extorted from Mr. Grote by the study of Plato and Xenophon. Suggestions like those of Mr. Newman have not been often responded to.

Carlyle's testimony.

"The greatest of all heroes," says Carlyle, "is One whom we do not name." "Let sacred silence meditate that sacred matter.'

Another, who is an open rejecter of Christianity, writes:

W. R. Greg's testimony.

"It is difficult, without exhausting superlatives even to unexpressive and wearisome satiety, to do justice to our intense love, reverence, and admiration for the character and teachings of Jesus. We regard Him, not as the perfection of the intellectual or philosophic mind, but as the perfection of the spiritual character: as surpassing all men at all times in the closeness and depth of His communion with the Father. In reading His sayings, we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest Being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity. In studying His life, we feel that we are following the footsteps of the highest ideal yet presented to us upon earth."[1]

Objections to the Christian life founded on its special rules.

Most of the objections against the Christian ethics and the Christian life are founded upon its special rules, either as these are held to involve some defect in the ethical ideal, or the means of its realization. It is urged that many of the separate sayings of Christ were not original, because maxims like them had been before expressed by pagan sages, or were already current among the Jewish rabbis. Thus it is contended that the Golden Rule, and some of the directions found in the Sermon on the Mount, had been uttered before; and it is

[1] W. R. Greg: *Creed of Christendom*, pp. 227, 228.

likely that the counterparts of many others may have been struck out by the wise moralists of different nations. The views of such critics in respect to what constitutes originality in ethics, and of what would prove supernatural wisdom and insight, would seem to be very crude. If nothing had been known or taught before Moses or Christ, upon the duties between man and man, or between man and God, there would have been nothing to which either teacher could attach his doctrines,—nothing in the form of accepted moral truth to which either could appeal. Christ did not profess that all his teachings were new in any such sense as these critics suppose. He expressly declares that the special duties which He inculcates were implied in the law given by Moses. It is rather on the number and aptness and novelty of certain comprehensive directions concerning those duties to which men were especially averse that He rests his claims to either novelty or originality. It is chiefly because men were so strongly disinclined to see their duties in the light in which He represented them that his teachings were so original and novel. It is because He emphasized so many of these striking rules in respect to this class of duties; because He traced them up to their inner principle, and set them in contrast to the prevailing errors of the religious and moral guides of his time, and of all time except as taught by Him; because He

The views of negative critics very crude.

The precepts of Christ implied in the law of Moses.

Wherein his novelty and originality consist.

taught with authority,—that He makes good his claims to superhuman originality. More briefly stated, Christ is an original teacher of ethics, not because no other teacher has taught ethical truth as truly as He, nor because other teachers have not taught many of the same truths which He taught, but because He taught so many truths, so novel, so unexpected, and connected them by common principles which were at once profound and comprehensive, and because He effectually enforced them in the name of the perfect Father in heaven, and by the charms of his own spotless life.

Why Christ is an original teacher of ethics.

Alleged defects of Christian ethics.

It is urged, again, that Christianity does not enjoin every form and style of human excellence; that there are some classes of duties for which it does not provide,—for example, duties to the State, duties of honour, duties of courtesy and friendship, —many of which are derived from Greek and Roman, and not from Christian sources. J. S. Mill urges,[1]

> "While, in the morality of the best pagan nations, duty to the State holds even a disproportionate place, in purely Christian ethics that grand department of duty is scarcely noticed or acknowledged. It is in the Koran, not the New Testament, that we read the maxim, 'A man who appoints any man to an office, when there is in his dominions another man better qualified for it, sins against God and against the State.'"

The objection assumes that the Great Teacher professed to supply the world with a complete and

[1] *Essay on Liberty.*

systematic treatise upon the several classes of duties which were required in the times when He taught, or which might become necessary in subsequent generations. Nothing would seem to have been further from his intentions than to anticipate by special maxims all the new applications which would arise by the advanced and developed political and social condition of the human family, or even of the Christian community. Christ gave a few comprehensive directions to his followers, illustrated by striking examples, but both rules and examples were fitted to impress some fundamental principle, or some much-needed, because much-neglected, peculiarity of temper or act. He lived before his disciples a perfect life,—dropping from his lips countless golden sentences which were never written down, like that single one which Paul happened to think of, and Luke to record, "It is more blessed to give than to receive,"—and finished this perfect life by a patient and self-sacrificing death under cruel ignominy and torture. To humanity he left the legacy of these teachings and this life; and the force of neither has yet been exhausted. The question is not, whether Christ anticipated in form every question or rule of duty which might arise,—this He could not do unless the record of his teachings was to fill countless folios of casuistic directions,—but whether, in principle and spirit, He did not in fact meet and

The objection founded on an erroneous assumption.

The method of teaching adopted by Christ.

Acts xx. 35.

The question to be answered.

The history of ethical thought and feeling in Christendom supplies the answer.

provide for all these questions. This question is answered by the history of ethical thought and feeling in Christendom. We fearlessly ask, Has any exigency arisen in modern life, with all its refinements and complications, to which the spirit and principles of the Christian ethics have proved to be inadequate?

It cannot be objected that human experience has wrought out many special moral rules, and opened the way for many particular directions; and that, by the moulding influence of this experience, much of our present Christian morality has been shaped and perfected. This very fact illustrates the excellence and the universality of the teachings of Christ,—that they could give ethics a new spirit and profound principles, while they should not dispense with the aid of human experience for their development and perfection. It is the glory of these ethics, and their ample vindication, that they are able to take up and assimilate all that is taught or has been learned in any other school, whether ethnic or barbarous, whether Christian or infidel; that they can give welcome and find place for all that is learned in the schools of politics, civilization, or literature, and invest it with the interest and authority of Christian duty. Moreover, we cannot rightly understand Christian ethics unless we notice that the special directions and rules which were given

The excellence and universality of the teachings of Christ.

The special directions and rules given by Christ and the Apostles.

by Christ and the apostles, so far as these are distinguished from comprehensive and universal principles, were given for the particular occasions which called them forth, and that they can only be fairly judged by a reference to those circumstances and exigencies. There is more meaning and importance than is always recognized in the generally accepted principle, that the special directions of the New Testament are of universal obligation in those cases only in which the circumstances are parallel.

The extent of the obligations of the special directions.

It is more than hinted, however, that Christianity did not boldly meet the demands of its own time; that it was timid and time-serving in respect to practices which it was bound openly to reprove and denounce; that, in respect to slave-holding particularly, it evaded its duty. We cannot enter into this much-vexed question, and must content ourselves with saying that there is no sign of moral timidity in respect to other sins, opposition to which required the extremest courage. Not a few personal and social immoralities that were equally sanctioned by custom, and enforced by fashion, and hallowed by law and religion, were denounced with unflinching courage; and, even in respect to the conduct of the master to the slave, principles were broadly and boldly announced which were destructive of all the worst abuses of slavery, and tended to its extinction. How far social and

Christianity and slavery.

Principles announced that tended to its destruction.

civil relations modify the duties of external conduct has always been a delicate question in the purest and most elevated ethics; and the Christian ethics, so far as they are rules of external action, have not escaped, and could not escape, the same conditions. The Christian Church and the Christian sentiment of duty and right have certainly been most efficient in pushing the law of love to all possible reforms in the social and legal relations of the race. The spirit and law is as broad and as spiritual as it ever was.

Christian ethics and social and civil relations.

Philippians iv. 8.

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The spirit of reform of St. Paul.

No spirit of reform can be more radical and thorough-going than that of Paul in the words,

Philippians i. 9–11.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The right of private judgment

The discriminating boldness with which Christianity contends for the right of individual judgment in doubtful questions of external conduct and the tolerance and charity which it exacts towards those who differ from ourselves, is marvellously original. If the recognition of this right is not supernatural in its origination, the practice of the corresponding duty has proved itself so far

superhuman as not to be very general even among the best of Christians and the most sublimated of Rationalists and Radicals.

Objections to the motives in the Christian life.

The motives employed in the Christian ethics and the Christian life have been the subject of frequent and persistent objections. From the days of the old Stoics down to those of their latest disciples of the newest modern school, the objection has been uniformly and persistently urged, that Christianity encourages holiness, and discourages sin, by appeals to selfish feelings and by the use of mercenary motives. The Platonic Shaftesbury, the utilitarian Mill, the categorical Kant, and the intuitional Parker, Cobbe, and Lecky, unite in this common reproach. It might suffice to say that the objection, if it holds at all, does not hold against Christianity alone, but against every description of religious motives which springs from the positive influence of a personal God.

The objection does not hold against Christianity alone.

Christianity recognizes simple moral goodness and the right of conscience.

But we may say more. Christianity does not in any sense set aside the attractions which belong to simple moral goodness, nor does it supersede the authority which is of right asserted by the conscience. These attractions it heartily recognizes; this authority it honours as supreme. It adds other motives indeed, — motives that are warm with personal sympathy, and sacred by the gratitude and loyalty that are owed to the Father of spirits and the Eternal King. These motives, in their

Other motives.

Wherein the sanction of conscience consists.

turn, are sanctioned by the conscience, in that the Father whom we obey, and the Redeemer whom we love, are purity and goodness itself, commanding and exacting only that which is good. It should ever be remembered that, as human, we are not self-sufficing, though we are subject to the conscience as supreme. We are made to revere, to worship, to trust, and to obey, not the "super-personal Heart," but One who is no less personal than the dependent persons who exist in his likeness. As human, we seek his sympathy; we long for his friendship; we thirst for God, the living God, and for this reason we require the personal motives which glow with so intense an energy in the human Christ, the manifested Word. But we are not therefore selfish because we are human; we are not mercenary because we acknowledge our dependence and confess our wants. That is the selfish soul which, in hollow self-sufficiency, disdains to own its Father in heaven. It is the glory of the Christian ethics, that, while they are most unselfish in their disinterestedness, they are also intensely human and practical in their sympathies and their adaptations. The Christian life is better than every other,—not alone because its ideal is the highest, not because its rules for attaining it are more profound and practical, but also because its motives and inspiration are personal in their attractiveness and energy.

Christian ethics at once unselfish and intensely human.

Why the Christian life is better than any other

But we appeal from theory to fact. Whatever we may conclude in respect to the Christian ethics, we cannot deny that the personages and events of Christian history have been till now the most efficient forces in the service of a pure and unselfish life which man has as yet encountered. An appeal to fact.

The cross ought to have been long ago superseded, by instances more striking and touching, if humanity has made the advances which are claimed either in its ideal or its achievements of perfection. There have been witnesses for ethical truth, by word and life, since the days of Jesus; if any have known or done better than He, they ought long ago to have taken His place as examples and symbols to the race. But that there has been or will be any symbol or enforcer of human duty and sacrifice which may supersede the Christian history, is not even claimed by those who reject this history as supernatural. Christian history will never be superseded.

The proved efficiency, and the acknowledged necessity, of Christian truth and Christian history, to give effect to the Christian style of ethics and perfection, may well suggest the inquiry, whether Christianity as a life is not all that it claims to be. Any inference to the contrary is shattered by the stubborn logic of the facts that have been illustrated in the history, and been accepted in the convictions, of all Christendom. Christianity as a life all that it claims to be.

We have thus touched upon most of the positions

taken by the modern assailants of Christianity. They have not succeeded in setting aside the force of its history, of its doctrines, or of its life when considered independently. We have not considered any attempts to account for the union of these three superhuman features in one organism; for such an attempt has never in form been made.

No attempt has been made to account for the uni n of these three superhuman features in one organism.

Our argument is susceptible of another application, from the corruptions and abuses of Christianity. Why is it, that of all the religions, Christianity alone has found within itself the means and the motives to its own reformation and revival? Simply because its history never could be so totally debased as not always to suggest some wholesome truth, and some purifying and restraining duty; that its doctrines could never be so austere or so effeminate as to be incapable of some healthful manifestation of God; and its ethics, in their sternest and their most licentious forms, could never wholly obscure the tender sympathy and the sober purity of the Christ of the Christian story. The action and the interaction of these three elements of the Christian system have, not unfrequently, been the salvation of the Christian cause.

Why Christianity has within itself the means and motives to its own revival.

THE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS

OF

THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE

BY THE

REV. GEORGE RAWLINSON, M.A.

Argument of the Tract.

THE world may be regarded in two aspects, as a machine, and as a picture. The antiquity and permanent value of the argument from design are pointed out. Design is manifested in the beauty as well as the utility of the world. The sublime and beautiful are defined and distinguished. They are shown to be real qualities existing in external nature. Various manifestations of the sublime and beautiful are examined. They are shown to point to a Divine Architect, and to speak of a person, and to witness to the character of God. The sublime reveals Him as majestic, glorious, and terrible. The beautiful tells us of His goodness and beneficence. It is indicated how the objections of unbelief to this view may be met. The analogy in beauty to the Divine nature is pointed out. The universality of the sense of the sublime and beautiful among men is proved, and the conclusion drawn that God has placed us in a world which witnesses of Himself, which, in a certain sense, reflects His image, and is an adumbration of Him. The necessity of looking through nature up to nature's God, and of experiencing the power of His revealed will in order to a true change of heart is insisted on

THE

RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS

OF THE

SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE world without us has two aspects. To the natural philosopher it is a vast and complex machine—a machine so intricate and complicated, so infinitely exceeding in complexity anything that the skill and energy of man have ever created, that he hesitates about giving it the name, fearing to lower its character and dwarf its immensity by a term so common, so petty, so applicable to things of little worth. Yet still he feels that the word, though inadequate, is not incorrect. A machine is a system of matter contrived and put together for the production of some foreseen result or results; and nature, or the world without us, whatever else it may be, is certainly this. It is material; it is one, for all its parts act one upon another; it is put together and arranged in such a way as best fits it for the home of such a being as man, as most conduces to man's support, sustentation, advantage,

Two aspects of the world.

The world a machine.

The term inadequate but not incorrect.

general good, as leads on by degrees to his full physical and mental development. And there is every reason to believe that these results were foreseen. At any rate, the wisest and deepest thinkers, from the time of Anaxagoras and Socrates—may we not say from the time of David and Solomon?—have been convinced that they were foreseen and intended; and this conviction, or rather the expression of it, has constituted the "Argument from Design," at which Anaxagoras[1] glanced, when he said that "all things sprang from intelligence," on which Socrates constantly insisted,[2] which Cicero dwelt upon in his treatise "De Natura Deorum,"[3] and which Paley expanded into a volume. Whatever difficulties may be raised by materialists or agnostics, the "Argument from Design" for the existence, power, wisdom, and benevolence of God must always hold a place, and a most important place, among those whereby the great fundamental truth of all religions is reasonably established and defended.

The argument from design.

The permanence of its place among arguments in defence of religion.

The world as contemplated by the artist, is a picture

The other aspect of the world without us is that in which it presents itself to the poet, the painter, the lover of natural scenery. Fixing his eye on the external surface of things, he sees in the world the most marvellous and glorious of all possible pictures—a shifting representation of objects infi-

[1] Plato, *Phæd.* § 46. [2] Xen. *Memorabil.* i. 4. § 5–7.
[3] Cic. *De Nat. Deor.* ii. 9–23.

nitely varied, in almost all of which there is beauty, and in many the most entrancing loveliness. Nature is so arranged, that while it supports our bodily powers and sustains our mental forces, "feeds us, clothes us, gives us breath and motion, the use of our organs, and all the means of life;" it also stirs our feelings, impresses us with sentiments of a pure and elevated kind—wonder, awe, delight, hushed rapture, soft sadness, tender melancholy. The machine, instead of being as machines generally are, an unsightly object, is the very opposite. All around us and about us, from the first moment of our conscious existence to that in which we draw our last breath, are presented to our senses, and especially to our sense of sight, objects calculated to please and delight. All this is at least as much the work of intelligence and contrivance as the adaptation of nature to our physical wants and needs, and as capable of being made an argument for the existence of a wise Creator, who intended to produce certain effects upon His creatures by the outside, and, so to speak, pictorial aspect of nature, no less than by the marvels of its internal structure and mechanism. And the argument from this set of phenomena has a certain advantage over the other, in that it puts before us the Author of Nature in a less mechanical light, showing Him to us less as a workman than as an artist, revealing to us

Nature delights, subdues, awes, as well as sustains.

Intelligence displayed in these results.

The Author of nature an artist as well as a workman.

glimpses of His moral nature, His awfulness, His mysteriousness, His grandeur, His majesty, and at the same time of His tender love and care for man.

The object of the Tract.

The object of the present Tract will be to set forth this argument, and to show what Nature, in her outward manifestation, teaches concerning her Author, what are the means by which she teaches, and to what proportion of mankind her teaching is addressed. The importance of the argument will depend very much on the answer to be given to this last question, since any teaching that could be appreciated only by a select few, would be practically of little value.

I.

Two qualities in nature, the Sublime and the Beautiful, affect us with pleasurable emotions.

There are two qualities in the outward show of things natural, which are especially attractive, and which affect us with pleasurable emotions; and to these two qualities the best English writers have given the names of "the Sublime" and "the Beautiful." Some moderns prefer not to regard them as distinct, but range the Sublime under the Beautiful, whereof they consider it to be merely one form.[1] To us it seems that the older arrangement is at once the more logical and the more

[1] Professor Blackie, *On Beauty*, Discourse II. p. 96: Rev. R. St. John Tyrwhitt, *Natural Theology of Natural Beauty*, p. 105.

consonant with ordinary speech; for which two reasons we design to adopt it in the present Tract.

An objection to be met.

Before, however, addressing ourselves to the consideration of what the Sublime and the Beautiful in nature really are, it seems necessary to meet an objection often made, which would preclude any such consideration, by denying flatly that they are realities at all. The ideas of the sublime and the beautiful are, we are told, purely conventional: they vary from age to age; they differ in different countries, in different classes within the same country, in different individuals of the same class, in the same individual at different times. It is all a matter of taste, and tastes differ; there is no accounting for them. Pointed architecture was admired in the middle ages; contemned, decried, and branded as "Gothic" during the Renaissance; received once more into high favour in our own day. Terraced gardens, straight lines, clipped alleys, trim flower-beds, geometrical designs, statues, fountains, constitute the "beautiful" pleasure-grounds of one age; park-like arrangements, groves, clumps, plantations, sweeps of road, winding paths, the perfection of such grounds in another. Similarly with nature unadorned—the mountain scenery of our Lake districts and of Scotland was regarded by our upper classes a century ago as something to shrink from and shudder at, as harsh, bleak,

The objection stated.

dreary, dismal, dispiriting, savage, horrible: now it attracts thousands; it is run after, it is praised, painted, made the subject of volumes of prose and poetry, and a man is thought a barbarian who can contemplate sending a railway through a corner of it.

The objection not established.

No doubt there is much truth in this; but it is insufficient to prove what it aims at proving. All that can be said against there being an absolute standard of the sublime and beautiful, might be urged with equal force against there being an absolute standard of the morally good. Men's views on this subject vary more or less: each age and country has to some extent a morality of its own; there is such a thing as a class morality; and there are points upon which the moral standard of an individual may differ from that of his class, or even from his own at another time. Something like this is the case in every other field of human thought, excepting mathematics; and it is not rightly regarded as proving the unreality of the main ideas which pervade the several fields. Where difference of opinion exists, we must ask to what extent the difference prevails. Is there a predominant sentiment one way? Is it largely predominant? Does it embrace most of those who have given the largest share of attention to the subject? Is it found to be widely spread over various ages and countries? It is generally declared by writers on

Differences of opinion exist in every field of human thought save mathematics.

Questions to be put.

the beautiful, whether in nature or art, that there is a remarkable uniformity in the ideas entertained respecting it by civilized humanity in all ages and countries, and by races so different as the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, and the nations of modern Europe. Jewish literature shows us that the same aspects of nature were admired by David and Job as are admired now. Egyptian and Assyrian masterpieces receive no scant praise from modern artists. Greek sculpture has been generally accepted as the perfection of the art for above 2000 years. Roman architecture commands the approval and respect of moderns. A special unity of artistic opinion and feeling is observable wherever art culminates, as at Athens in the time of Pericles, at Rome under Augustus, in Italy during the *cinque cento*, and in Western Europe at the present day.

Uniformity of ideas in all ages respecting the beautiful.

Regarding, then, the sublime and beautiful as real qualities existing in external nature, let us proceed to inquire into the nature of each.

The sublime and beautiful are real qualities existing in external nature.

And firstly, concerning the sublime, what is it? Mr. Burke, towards the close of the last century, defined it as that quality in nature which produces a feeling of astonishment in the human mind, mingled with horror.[1] He said—

Mr. Burke's definition of the sublime.

"Terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime."[2]

[1] Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, Part II. § 1, p. 119

[2] *Ibid.* § 2.

and again—

"Whatever is terrible with regard to sights, is sublime too."[1]

Consequences of Mr. Burke's view.

It would follow from this, that the highwayman who presents a pistol at our head, and demands our money or our life, is sublime; that the cobra is sublime as he coils himself to spring at us, and even the scorpion that gets into our boot. Mr. Burke seems scarcely to have shrunk from these consequences, since he instances as causing the terror whereof he speaks, "serpents and poisonous animals of almost all kinds." But the common sense of mankind at the present day will, we feel sure, reject such a view, which was certainly rejected by Longinus, who said—

His view rejected by the common sense of mankind.

Longinus on the sublime.

"There are affections quite remote from the sublime, as pity, grief, *and fear.*"[2]

Difference between awe and fear.

The real feeling which the sublime arouses in man is not fear, but awe. The two are very different. Fear is felt when we apprehend as certain, or even as probable, the approach of any danger.[3] It is connected with an expectation of suffering. It is felt towards inanimate as much as animate things. We fear a stormy sea when we are on shipboard, a sound of ice cracking when we are on a frozen pool, a fence that we think our horse will not carry us over, a wasp buzzing about our face,

[1] *Ibid.* [2] Longinus, *De Sublimitate*, § 8, p. 25, ed. Toup.
[3] Arist. *Rhet.* ii. 5, § 1.

a dog that looks as if he would bite us, and the like. Such things do not "awe" us. In the inmost core of its essence awe would seem to be a *personal* feeling, one which only a personality, or the imagination of a personality, can produce. We feel awe at the manifestation of fierce and strong emotions, both in individuals, and still more in crowds, at the sight or even at the sound of a great battle, at the courts of powerful monarchs, in the presence of great men, when we rise to address a large assembly on a solemn subject. It is true that we feel awe also when no persons are directly concerned—in the silent aisles of a dim Gothic cathedral, under the dome of St. Peter's or St. Paul's, in mountain gorges and on mountain heights, on the broad Atlantic when we pace the deck alone, in the solemn stillness of a calm starlight night. Our awe in such cases is not felt directly towards a person; but it is at least questionable whether, but for some imagining of a person, distinct and clearly recognised, or dim and shadowy, as connected with the scene before us, we should experience the sentiment in question, or be moved by any stir of feeling beyond our wont.

Awe a personal feeling.

Awe sometimes felt when no person is directly concerned.

Explanation of this fact.

It will be necessary in a later part of the present tract to return to this subject. For the present we are content to define "the sublime" as that quality in nature which produces in man a feeling of awe.

The true definition of the sublime.

Mr. Burke's definition of the beautiful.

In the second place, we have to consider the nature of "the beautiful." Mr. Burke defined it as

> "that quality, or those qualities in bodies, by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it."[1]

Objection to it.

The last clause of the definition is somewhat vague, and therefore objectionable; while, according to our present use of words, the emotion of "love" is scarcely that which natural beauty would commonly be said to call forth. We do, indeed, call beautiful objects "lovely," at any rate occasionally, but we scarcely say that we love a beautiful tree, or flower, or landscape, nor do we even necessarily "love" a beautiful woman. Beautiful objects seem to be those which, from something inherent in themselves, and not from association, cause us sensible pleasure, the pleasure varying in degree from a slight feeling of satisfaction up to a very strong delight. If this be so, we may define "the beautiful" as that quality in material objects which, being inherent in them, produces in our minds a feeling of pleasure more or less intense.

What beautiful objects are.

True definition of the beautiful.

It is a question among writers upon the beautiful whether we can go further than this, and analyse natural beauty into its elements, or, in other words, lay down the grounds upon which external nature pleases us. The assertion has been made that

[1] See the work above quoted, Part III. § 1.

"people can generally upon examination agree on the natural inherent quality which causes their admiration of a natural object, and makes them experience beauty."[1]

Variety of opinions with respect to the elements of natural beauty.

But the writers who have attempted an analysis have come to such different conclusions, and some of their conclusions have been so strange, that the point is clearly one on which there is not likely to be agreement at present. Mr. Burke laid it down that the elements of natural beauty were

"Smallness, smoothness, gradual variations, delicacy and beauty of colour."[2]

Professor Blackie makes them

"Order, congruity or harmony, the humorous (!) actuality, sublimity, contrast, religion (!), and expressiveness."[3]

An attempt at an enumeration of them.

If we ourselves were to attempt an enumeration, we should be inclined to mention harmony, grace, softness or tenderness, repose, brilliancy within certain limits, variety, purity, and contrast. But we should be far from venturing to assert that such an enumeration is exhaustive. The cause which makes an object seem beautiful to us is often inscrutable; and we much doubt whether those who agree in admiring a thing would very often agree as to the reason why they admire it.

The cause which makes an object beautiful often inscrutable.

Leaving then this disputed point, let us consider how far, and in what respects, sublimity and beauty

[1] Tyrwhitt's *Natural Theology of Natural Beauty*, p. 105.

[2] *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, Part III. § 13–17.

[3] *Essay on Beauty*, Discourse I. pp. 11, 35; II. pp. 65, 73, 96; III. p. 104, etc.

are impressed by nature upon those open to such impressions, or in other words, how far the natural world is contrived and calculated by its outward show to raise feelings of awe and delight in those who give their attention to it.

The comparative rarity of the sublime in nature.

The sublime in nature is, no doubt, comparatively speaking, rare. It does not meet us, as beauty does, at every turn. It derives some of its power to move us from its (comparatively) infrequent manifestation; and it would seem to have been kept back and economised for the very purpose that it should more sensibly affect us when we happen to come within its sphere. Yet still it is not so rare as is generally imagined. To those who desire it and seek after it, it is not very difficult to find.

Manifestations of the sublime.

The sublime is perhaps most clearly and powerfully manifested by means of mountains and mountain scenery, for mountains are the grandest things upon the earth's surface, and possess every element of greatness—apparent size, mass, solidity, elevation, infinite variety in form and colour, multitudinousness in details. As a modern writer has well said—

Mountains.

"mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery," [1]

they are

"the earth's natural cathedrals, or natural altars, overlaid with gold, and bright with broidered work of flowers, and with their

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. p. 353.

clouds resting on them as the smoke of a continual sacrifice." [1] "Great cathedrals, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of streams and stones, altars of snow, and vaults of purple traversed by the continual stars" [2]—"reared up as witnesses for God to man, as shadows of His righteousness and indications of His strength." [3]

The sublime reveals itself in mountain scenery, not only where the mountains are of extreme elevation, as in the Himalayas and the Andes—not even only where they rise above the line of constant frost, and show us their crests wrapped in a stainless robe of eternal snow; but also where their elevation is but moderate, as in our own country, in Germany, and in the greater part of France. Under certain atmospheric conditions, which are not uncommon, the Welsh and Cumbrian mountains have a grandeur not far below that of the Alps, and are quite capable of arousing that solemn feeling of awe which marks the presence of the sublime.

Mountains of moderate height reveal the sublime.

Again, the sublime reveals itself in the sea. Vaster than any mountain mass, stretching on and on, from the sand or shingle that forms its beach to a seemingly illimitable distance at the horizon, where it melts into the sky, generally exhibiting infinite variety of hue and tint, of light and shade, and always dimpled and roughened with innumerable restless waves, the boundless ocean raises naturally in the souls of all men the same sensation as the mountains raise, but tinged perhaps with more of

The sea.

[1] *Ibid* p. 386. [2] *Ibid.* p. 359. [3] Psa. xxxvi. 6; lxv. 6.

sadness and of melancholy. Mighty and majestic in its calmer hours, when, lashed into fury by the tremendous force of a strong gale, it hurls the thunders of its huge waves upon a rock-bound coast, and flings its columns of snow-white spray high up into the air, it affects us like a personal presence with a sense of will and power. It is perhaps a question whether the palm for sublimity ought to be assigned to mountains or to the sea in certain of its aspects. The resemblance and almost parallelism of the two is grandly expressed in the Psalmist's glorious distich—

Doubtful whether mountains or sea are most sublime.

"Thy righteousness is like the strong mountains : Thy judgments are like the great deep." [1]

Plains.

Vast plains beheld from an eminence, even a moderate eminence, affect us with a feeling of sublimity from their immense extent and apparent infinity. A great alluvial plain in many respects resembles the sea. To the eye it extends as far; it equally melts away into the haze of the sky, and in most instances it presents even greater variety. Any one who has once looked down upon the plain of Lombardy, from the Monterone near Baveno, or from any other similar projecting buttress on the southern side of the Alps, will have felt the wonderful grandeur of such a scene, and have found that flats, generally thought wearisome and monotonous, can, under certain circumstances, be im-

Resemblance to the sea.

The plain of Lombardy as seen from Monterone.

[1] Psa. xxxvi. 6 (Prayer Book Version).

pressive and striking, affecting the mind much in the same way as it is affected by the ocean, causing us to feel admiration, wonder, and awe.

Other manifestations of the sublime.

It is not given to all to have the opportunity of beholding the glory of mountain scenery even on the moderate scale on which nature has granted it to the British isles, nor do the circumstances of their life allow all to contemplate the mighty spectacle of the apparently illimitable sea. Even plains fifty miles across are beyond the reach of thousands, who are thus cut off from these main manifestations of the sublime. But there are other manifestations from which no human being who lives a few years—in Europe, at any rate—is debarred. Among the most sublime of natural sights is that of the sky on a clear *light* night, when the countless stars are not mere pin-pricks on a black canopy, "letting the glory through," but are seen as differing in their distances, as suns hung up at intervals in the wide field of infinite space; and that infinite space, measured to some extent by their intervals, appears as a boundless void, extending itself in stretch after stretch, and depth after depth, beyond Arcturus, beyond Orion, beyond the Pleiades, beyond even the Milky Way and the *nebulæ*, realising more than any other natural sight the idea of the infinite, and so the best earthly representative of the infinitude of God. And the infiniteness of dimension is confirmed and

The sky on a clear light night.

The impression made on the mind by the stars.

strengthened by the infiniteness of number. The stars seen by the naked eye may not in fact exceed three thousand; but they impress the mind as though they were three thousand millions; they are absolutely countless to the ordinary observer; they force upon him the conception of infinite number; and the man who raises his eye to the spangled heaven has impressed upon him at one and the same time the immeasurable distance of the void into which he looks, and the innumerable multitude of the burning spheres which crowd it.

The thunderstorm.

Another less common, but still not infrequent manifestation of the sublime, is the thunderstorm. There are but few regions of the habitable world where they are unknown, not many where they are rare phenomena. To those who witness them they can never be anything but sublime, magnificent, awful. When, after long continuance of clear sky and burning heat, the clouds at last marshal their hosts, and piled in tier above tier, advance, borne by contrary currents, like armies to the encounter; and the earth, sunk in gloom, awaits the shock of battle; and the winds, hushed in an unnatural calm, listen for the signal which is to set them loose; and a lurid darkness prevails; and the heavy weight of an over-electrified atmosphere presses like a burden upon the soul of man, there is for a time an awful, most awful, expectancy. Then the signal is given; blinding flashes

The effect on the beholder.

leap from cloud to cloud; the thunder roars, rattles, crackles, echoes along the sky roof, first increasing in volume of sound, then dying away by degrees into a low distant murmur; flash succeeds to flash, peal is mingled with peal; the winds are loosened; rain descends in torrents; a white watery curtain hides both earth and sky; and the two seem commingled together in a confused mass. On some minds the effect produced is actual fear, which is sometimes so intense as to swallow up all other feelings. But when men are not alarmed for their own personal safety, the impression made is one of solemnity and awe, not easily shaken off, and not soon forgotten.

Fear produced in some minds

Awe produced when there is no alarm for personal safety.

Even without the accompaniment of lightning and thunder, severe storms of wind mount sometimes to the level of the sublime. When Æolus seems to have opened his prison doors, and all the winds of heaven to have rushed forth, when the trees toss their branches hither and thither before the conflicting gusts, or go down one after another with terrific crash in the main line of the storm's march; when the rack of clouds hurries across the sombre sky, and the roar of the tempest changes into a scream, almost like a human voice, there is a manifestation of power which awes and solemnizes the mind. The mighty strength of a viewless force, how generated it is impossible to conceive, a force wholly beyond our control, of which we cannot

Storms of wind.

The mystery of the wind.

even tell "whence it cometh, or whither it goeth,"[1] has about it a grandeur, a strangeness, and a mystery which is deeply impressive.

Sublimity culminates in certain abnormal phenomena, which, however, are for the most part so bound up with danger to human life as to cause in the beholders the absorption of the sentiment of awe in that of personal fear. To this head belong earthquakes, sudden inundations, as those produced by the bursting of a natural reservoir, and eruptions from volcanoes. When the solid ground heaves and shakes under our feet, when deep fissures open before our eyes and close again, when masses of stone detach themselves from the rocks over our heads, and come bounding down the hillsides into the vales, when subterranean sounds, like the groans of earth herself, reach our ears, when lakes dry up before us suddenly, when the sea recedes only to return again with a wave that submerges half a city, could we have a secure station from which to gaze, our feeling would be awe of the deepest and intensest kind. As it is, the spectator is too closely interested to feel anything but fear. Descriptions of earthquakes awe us, but the sight of them would alarm. Thus their rarity does not diminish the occasions for the excitation of awe, since a secure station from which to contemplate an earthquake is unattainable.

Earthquakes.

Descriptions of them awe, but the sight would alarm

[1] John iii. 8.

Inundations.

The case is nearly the same with sudden inundations and the spectators of them. When a natural reservoir—an Alpine lake, or a glacier-dammed stream—suddenly bursts, and the great mass of pent-up waters comes thundering down the vale, uprooting pines, tearing away cliffs, submerging or sweeping before them houses, the sense of danger is so strong in those present at the catastrophe that fear commonly fills their whole soul, and there is consequently no room left for awe. Awe supervenes when they look back upon what they saw, and remember the irresistible might of the raging flood, how it bent tall trees like reeds, or snapped them like canes, how it treated huge boulders like pebbles, and solid stone-houses as if they had been cottages of mud; how it came on and on without pause, bearing the trophies of its victory aloft in the floating wreck that crowned its crest, roaring all the while like a lion eager for prey.

Volcanoes.

With volcanic eruptions there is, in ordinary cases, far less of danger, and consequently a much better opportunity for a calm contemplation and realisation of the actual spectacle. Now and then, as recently in Java, the peril is as great as on the occasion of an earthquake. But ordinarily the case is otherwise. The showers of stones, which a volcano is wont to eject, can usually be escaped by taking up a position to windward. The lava stream moves slowly, and, though nothing is able

to arrest or divert its course, can endanger the life of no human being who has the command of his limbs and of his senses. And the spectacle is often sublime in the highest degree. The molten mass pouring over the edge of the crater in its red glow, and gradually creeping down the mountain slope, destroying all that comes in its way, seems a sort of unrelenting monster that nothing can appease, and makes the spectator shudder as he looks. By night the spectacle is most impressive. The burning stream sheds all around a lurid light, and as it approaches the pine forests or the chesnut woods, shows at first the stately trees in their full beauty and vigour; then, drawing nearer, suddenly shrivels up their foliage, and turns them to bare skeletons; after a while causes them all at once to burst out into flames through the excess of heat, and to burn as they stand till nothing is left but the blackened stumps. Those which directly meet the moving mass are borne down and fall crashing to the ground; those on either side are burnt, blackened, or scorched; and a wide road is cut, through the dense forest gloom, to the point where the lava stops, its flow having ceased.

The spectacle of volcanoes at night.

Such are the chief occasions on which, as it seems to us, nature impresses man with a sense of the sublime. It follows to consider by what means chiefly we are impressed by nature with a sense of the beautiful.

The beautiful in nature.

It would, no doubt, be generally allowed that the beautiful is spread by nature far more widely over her works than the sublime; but we question whether it has ever yet been distinctly recognised how *very* widely beauty is diffused over natural objects of almost every kind and class. All attempts at enumeration must fall short of the reality, and it is only because we earnestly desire to rouse men from their apathy, and force them to look for the beautiful in almost the whole range of nature, that we address ourselves to the task of pointing out the principal ways, or rather some of the principal ways, wherein the spectacle which nature presents to our eyes is so contrived as to please us, charm us, delight us.

The wide diffusion of the beautiful.

Picturesque scenes.

First, then, there are the scenes which are ordinarily characterised as "picturesque," whole districts where confessedly nature is at her best, and shows us at every turn some fresh revelation of her charms, some combination of features, each one of which is admirable. Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Scotland, Norway, Wales, the Lake District, Devonshire, Cornwall, are instances of such regions, more or less accessible to many of us, and replete with beauty of a hundred different kinds. Mountains, lakes, rivers, glaciers, forests, precipices, gorges, cataracts, constitute the principal attractions of the most highly-favoured among these

districts; while clear streams, stretches of moorland, woods, copses, cascades, dells, ferny brakes, heathery hillsides, are among the main beauties of the regions which hold the second rank. Form, colour, proportion, aerial perspective, light and shade, grand outline, multitudinous detail, unite in scenes of these kinds, and produce in the mind that sense of enjoyment and general exhilaration which render them of priceless value as restoratives to the jaded and weary workers in the human hive.

The general character of the world's scenery.

It is not, however, in such regions as these that life has to be passed by the majority of mankind. The world is mostly lowland, either flat plain, or more often alternation of low hill with quiet hollow, and has an aspect which, to a large number of men, is tame, dull, unexciting, commonplace, stupid, uninteresting. Yet a little attention, a little care in holding ourselves open to agreeable impressions, will enable us to find, even in the most homely scenes and districts, frequent if not constant sources of delight. The sky is always overhead; and though skies are sometimes grey and dismal-looking, dark with coming snow, or half obliterated by drizzling rain, yet for the most part there is in the sky something to look at, something to cheer.

Sources of delight everywhere to be found.

The sky.

A cloudless sky has a beauty of its own; and, though it is possible in some climes to feel the ceaseless vision of intense blue day after day, for weeks or months together, wearisome and mono-

tonous, yet in our own land this satiety can scarcely be experienced. In England a clear blue cloudless heaven is too rare a sight to weary men, and presents, in its deep purity and perfect peace, a spectacle that is well fitted to please, to calm, to elevate. And if, as commonly happens, clouds alternate with the blue expanse and break its uniformity, then there is at once placed before us a source of keen interest and abundant enjoyment. The mystery of the clouds is so great, their forms generally so majestic or so graceful, their tints so pleasing, their variety so charming, their movements so curious and attractive, that few persons are not at any rate occasionally impressed by them; while to many they are, to all they might be, an almost ever present object of delight. Professor Ruskin has given us, in his greatest work, thirty pages upon the subject of "cloud beauty," and has certainly not exhausted it. Every sort of beauty and of majesty is to be found in some kind, or some combination, of these air-chariots, which are placed before the eyes of all mankind in countless profusion, and with so much variation that no one of the innumerable cloud pictures is ever exactly reproduced.

Cloud scenery.

On the earth, whether high land or low land, to render it habitable by man, there must always be water; and water, unless its purity be deeply sullied, is in all its forms beautiful. The river,

The beauty of water.

the stream, the brook, the rill, have their respective charms, partly in themselves, partly in their surroundings; and in the dullest and homeliest of regions the peasant or the artisan may reach by an hour's walk a brook-side or a river-side, where beauty in a thousand forms will greet him. Pure pellucid water is lovely in itself; self-moved, it becomes mysterious; as it babbles over stones it delights a second sense; as it glasses surrounding objects, and so doubles them, it seems magical

Objects reflected in water.

There is scarcely an object, however ugly, which, when reflected in water, does not at once acquire a certain sort of beauty, which makes it pleasant to look upon. Still water has beauties greater in some respects than those of running water; for, first, it reflects better; secondly, it is in general more pellucid; thirdly, it more often and more truly mirrors the glory of the heavens on its smooth surface. Lakes, reservoirs, ponds, pools, must be added to rivers, streams, brooks, and rills, as giving opportunity to most men of enjoying the beauty which nature has attached to water.

The vegetable vesture of the earth.

Earth, naked and bare, is an unsightly object; wherefore nature has thought good to clothe the dry land with a vesture of vegetable forms. And in each of these there is beauty. The soft grass makes a carpet for our feet, and seems at first sight too humble to attract our notice except in the mass, too commonplace to be properly regarded as

possessing charm or loveliness. Yet, in the first place, observe its colour, green—how grateful to the eye, how restful, how satisfactory! Imagine a blood-red vegetation meeting us everywhere, or a cold grey, and how different would be the sensation with which we should behold any landscape or country scene! And again, condescend to look on a tuft of grass in its individuality. See the soft and delicate texture of the long blades, which yet are strong withal—strong to push themselves through the harder mould, strong to bear up against wind and rain, strong to endure extremities of cold and heat. And then observe the delicacy of the curved lines which enclose the leaves, and the graceful bend of each leaf as it grows long, and its weight begins to tell upon it and deflect it from the straight line. See lastly, the heads of blossom which the tuft throws up, light and feathery, or glossy and sleek, leaning this way and that as the breeze sways them, in curves, each one of which is full of grace. Nor is the grass the whole of earth's primary vest. Within it and above it are a thousand bright-hued flowers—

The beauty of the grass

"a coloured fantasy of embroidery on the green robe; while over all these tower tall trees, with their wealth of foliage, varied into infinitude of appeal to the fancy of man." [1]

Manifold and multiform indeed are the beauties of trees! Here we see

The beauties of trees.

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. v. p. 3.

"fragility and force, softness and strength, in all degrees and aspects; unerring uprightness, as of temple pillars, or undivided wandering of feeble tendrils on the ground; mighty resistances of rigid arm and limb to the storms of ages, or wavings to and fro with faintest pulse of summer streamlet. Roots cleaving the strength of rock, or binding the transience of the sand; crests basking in sunshine of the desert, or hiding by dripping spring and lightless cave; foliage far tossing—clothing with variegated, everlasting films the peaks of the trackless mountains, or ministering at cottage doors to every gentlest passion and simplest joy of humanity." [1]

The beauty of flowers.

What words can express the beauty of beautiful flowers! Each country has treasures of its own, little known elsewhere; but some flowers have by their transcendent merit become cosmopolite, and are the common property of mankind, almost as much as skies and trees and streams. The

Their colour and texture.

pure colour and delicate texture of roses, lilies, hyacinths, and again of rhododendrons, azaleas, geraniums, cacti, pansies, affect the mind with so intense a feeling of exquisite delight that the thrill of pleasure which they cause is almost akin to pain. One feels that they are *too* beautiful. So pure, so perfect, so fragile! They present to us a tender freshness, a living glow, and a perfect stainlessness, which are inimitable by art, and which place them in the very forefront of Nature's

Their transient character.

products; while at the same time they bear about them unmistakable indications of their transient character, and in the full brightness of their glory speak to us of decay and of the tomb.

Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. v., pp. 3, 4.

Among the lowest forms of vegetable life are mosses and lichens, "humblest of the green things that live," yet not without their own special charm, —rather, richly dowered with a peculiar wealth of beauty. From the stag-moss that diversifies the close browsed turf on Welsh hills as with an embroidery of silken leafage, to the green velvet bosses that stud the surfaces of old walls in spring, there is in this lowly form of vegetation a combined delicacy and richness not to be described in words. Covering with a luxuriance beyond that of any grass the dank mould and decaying leaves in deep woods, spreading a mantle over unshapely stones and stumps, creeping up the stems of trees and adding value to their greys and browns, softening the hard face of beetling crag and scarred precipice, mosses of a hundred kinds in quiet and without pretence do their good work of beautifying what were otherwise unsightly and harsh, so rendering us a service not the less real because it is for the most part unobserved. And lichens! May we hope to be once more excused if we quote from the master-spirit, who has set nature before mankind in our day as none ever set it before?—

Mosses.

Their wealth of beauty.

Lichens.

"Lichens! How is one to tell of the traceries of intricate silver, and fringes of amber, lustrous, arborescent, burnished through every fibre into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for simplest, sweetest offices of grace? They will not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love token; but of these the wild bird will make its nest, and the wearied child his pillow."[1]

[1] *Ibid.* p. 103.

While the objects of which the earth is composed are thus for the most part, even the humblest of them, beautiful exceedingly, there is a special glamour spread over them from time to time by climatic and atmospheric influences. Sunshine is the most mighty of these influences, bringing out, as it does, forms, intensifying colours, heightening the whole tone of any scene by contrast of light and shade, adding cheerfulness, and so increasing pleasure. But sunshine is most effective, most conducive to our delight, under certain circumstances of comparatively infrequent occurrence. Gleams of sunshine are more beautiful than a steady continuous downpour of the solar light; and almost any extended scene may be made charming by the rapid passage across it of sunshine and cloud-shadow apparently chasing one the other. Sunrise and sunset have each their own peculiar glory—a glory far beyond that of mere ordinary sunlight. The charm of sunrise is perhaps mainly in that gradual lighting up of the eastern sky which we call "the dawn,"—which Vedic Indians worshipped as "Ushas, the friend of men;" and Greeks of the heroic times, as "rosy-fingered Eôs,"—a charm of combined purity and harmony, when the effect is simplest: of these, together with brilliancy of colour, when the combination of cloud with clear sky renders it complicated.

The effect of climatic and atmospheric influences.

Sunshine.

Sunrise.

In sunsets, owing probably to the greater moisture

Sunset.

of the air when the mighty source of light and heat has been employed all day long in drawing up vapours from the earth, the sky tints are, all of them, intensified, and pictures are presented which challenge the attention even of the most careless. Crimson, scarlet, pink, violet, blue, white, yellow, purple, even a pale unearthly green show themselves side by side at such times,—the key of colour is strained to its highest—the glory is extraordinary, almost as if heaven were opened—the clouds take fantastic shapes—the gorgeous flush of the west is reflected in the east—the whole sky canopy glows with tints of unwonted depth and brilliance. At such times the charm of intense colour attains its fullest development, and attuned into perfection of harmony by nature's marvellous laws of corresponding tones, laps the soul in Elysium.

Mist and vapour.

Quite different from sunlight, and almost antithetical to it, yet still a source of beauty, are mist and vapour. Sunlight shows objects, mist and vapour shroud them; sunlight brings out and heightens colour; mist and vapour, speaking generally, subdue it. The charm of vapour seems to lie in the mystery wherewith it enwraps objects. Mountains seen through it loom ten times more vast than in a clear atmosphere; distances appear more remote; all forms vaguer. In mountain scenery of the noblest kind the grandeur and the

The grandeur and gloom of mountains increased by them.

gloom are infinitely increased by the vapoury environment, here appearing as white mist along the course of some main gorge, there as cloud accidentally left behind in the shelter of some curve of rocks, elsewhere as shower or storm darkening a mountain-top, or mountain-side, anon as simple vapour volatilised, hiding the details and intensifying the blue of distances. If the landscape be flat and commonplace, mist and shower and cloud can transfigure it into a scene of more than ordinary beauty, by adding at once variety and mystery, hiding some features, bringing out others, and introducing life, animation, and interest.

Effects of mist and shower in flat and commonplace landscape.

Atmospheric effect culminates in the rainbow, the most lovely and the most transient of all the great sights of nature. In a perfect rainbow, a double arch spans the sky, reaching from the horizon almost to the zenith, the outer fainter, the inner brighter, with the order of the prismatic hues reversed. Coming suddenly, like a fairy vision, after gloom and heavy downpour, it brings a natural gladness to the heart, heightened no doubt by religious association, but partly independent of it. Iris was even to the Greeks a divine messenger; and the contrast of a celestial radiance with earthly gloom, the passing away of storm, and the promise of better things to come, must always give to the bow set in the cloud a charm of a peculiar kind. Artistically, the rainbow is too marked a

The rainbow.

A Divine messenger to the Greeks.

feature in a landscape, reducing to insignificance all the rest; but considered in itself it is one of the loveliest spectacles in nature, combining as it does softness, brilliancy, purity, variety, and intense colour, with an element of mystery that the explanations of science fail to remove.

We have spoken of the charms which mist and shower lend to landscapes by spreading over them a partial obscurity; but there is a charm also in an obscurity which is general. This is especially felt at the hour of twilight. In twilight, the gamut of colour being reduced to a few notes, a peacefulness of effect is produced, heightened by the calm that mostly accompanies the time, and the silence that falls on earth as its inhabitants sink into repose. Tones and outlines are softened; distances blend together more or less; and mystery is largely increased. A slight hollow has the effect of a profound gorge; the bank beyond it shows like a mountain; its bushes or its heather become a forest. If we revisit in the daytime scenes beheld for the first time by twilight, we are often astonished to find what a power the partial darkness had to change the commonplace into the grand.

Twilight

Its effects

Black night, that hides all things, is weird and terrible; but night, illumined by her proper luminary, the moon, has beauties of her own scarcely second to those of the day. There is a delicacy, a tenderness, a sweetness in moonlight

Moonlight

scenes, which sensibly move us, and cause a pleasing melancholy, an agreeable pensiveness. Silently the moon sails through the light, fleecy clouds, bathing them in her pale splendour; gently she casts her beams on tree and plain and hillside, touching them here and there with silver; charmingly she reflects herself on the broad rippled expanse of sea or lake; lovingly she seems to sport with dancing rill or sprayey waterfall. Even ugly objects grow beautiful seen in her magic light; and in the depth of her soft shadows there is perfect peace.

The effects of moonlight.

Changes of seasons.

The aspects of Nature are continually diversified by the changes of seasons, not one of which but has beauties unknown to the rest. The ramifications of this subject are manifold; but we will confine ourselves to one aspect belonging to one special season, different from all others and very striking. The dress which winter—true winter—throws over nature, and which in certain regions is perpetual, has inexpressible loveliness. Ice and snow are among the most beautiful things which nature brings into being—snow, from the first feathery snowflake, produced suddenly as by a miracle out of invisible vapour,[1] to the huge mass which overhangs a mountain-crest, and in its fall engulfs a village; ice, from the flowery forms upon a

Winter.

Ice and snow.

[1] See a paper by Professor Tyndall in the *Contemporary Review* a few years ago.

window-pane to the blue-green glories of a glacier cavern. The perfect purity of snow is no doubt among its principal charms; but mere stretches of continuous white, albeit white of dazzling brilliance, would scarcely gratify the eye for long; it is when snow becomes a principal element in mountain form, and is bent into a thousand complicated curves and folds, so as to be diversified by shadows of exquisite softness and rare subtlety of tone, that its beauty becomes entrancing, and leads our eye away from all other features of the scene to gaze on the snow-fields that lie so near the heaven and almost seem a part of it. This perfection of snow beauty belongs especially to the high Alps; but we may see something of the same at home in deep snows on downs or fells, especially at morning and at evening, when the shadows are the longest. Snow.

Ice attains its greatest loveliness in glaciers, where beauty and variety of form are combined with an extreme purity and strangeness of hue, that are wonderfully impressive. Externally the glacier looks like a stormy sea, frozen in a moment, when the waves were at their highest. Thus viewed, it has little beauty of colour, from the dirty look of the moraines which cover great part of its surface. It is when we plunge into the crevasses and the caverns that the colour-beauty of glaciers begins. Then we have revealed to us an ethereal blue, melting on the one hand into pure white, Glaciers

and on the other into pitch blackness, or else, in some glaciers, or portions of glaciers, a sort of delicate sea-green, scarcely seen elsewhere, most like perhaps to the pale green hue that is sometimes observable in the sky at sunset. To this colour-beauty is added that of deep purity, and of semi-transparency, the light often penetrating through the ice roof into the caverns, and being actually made blue in the process, as though it had passed through a stained-glass window.

Icicles.

Ice proper among ourselves has scarcely much beauty, unless it be in the form of icicles, pendent from rock ledges, or where an expanse of it reflects the glow of a sun shining through haze. But there is a form of ice, seen comparatively rarely, which is one of the loveliest of natural things. In

Hoar-frost.

hoar-frost, the water contained in the air crystallizing by degrees, not only upon the grass at our feet, but upon every bough and twig in hedges and trees, and standing out from the twigs on all sides, in long *spicula*, forms a sort of winter foliage, of pure white, almost as lovely as the tender green of early spring. The effect, on a bright still day, of the white trees lifting themselves up as masses into the deep blue sky is wonderfully lovely, and makes winter almost rival the glories of the summer-time.

These are some of the beautiful forms in nature. There are many more; but enough has been said, we think, to indicate the quasi-universality of

loveliness in things natural, the profuseness with which beauty has been spread over the earth.

II.

What the Sublime and Beautiful teach.

We have now to consider, what the Sublime and the Beautiful, thus widely diffused as we have shown them to be, teach us concerning the supra-sensuous world (in which man by an instinct of his nature believes), either separately or in combination?

Evidence of contrivance in them.

In the first place, then, there seems to be quite as much evidence of contrivance, and so of an intelligent Author of Nature, in the intricate and complicated arrangements, laws, forces, and the like, whereby the beauty and sublimity of things natural are produced, as in the arrangements conducive to utility, which constitute the ordinary "argument from design." To arrange Nature as she is arranged, to give beauty to all, or almost all, her lines, tints, movements, changes, must have required as much and as deep thought, consideration, wisdom, as were needed to make her so well adapted as she is for our sustentation, support, physical and mental development. The argument from design is thus, as it were, duplicated, all the same consequences following from the perfect adaptation of nature to produce in us certain elevating and delightful thoughts and emotions, which have long been recognised as following upon

The argument from design duplicated.

her manifest correlation to the circumstances of our physical condition.

Our admiration of the Divine Architect heightened by the union of use and be uty effected by His plan.

Secondly, the wonder and admiration naturally produced in us by the contemplation of a Being, at once so all-wise and so all-powerful as to be able to contrive on so vast a scale and to effect all His purposes perfectly, are sensibly increased by the consideration that it is not by two distinct and separate sets of laws and dispositions, that His two purposes of Utility and Beauty are subserved, but that the very same set of arrangements which conduce to our life, health, and comfort, are made also effective for our delight and moral exaltation. Use and Beauty are inseparably united by the Divine Architect. The very same laws which feed us, clothe us, give us breath and motion, the use of our organs, and all the means of life, throw off also in their working all the beauty and sublimity of which we have spoken.[1]

The sublime speaks to us of a Person.

Further, the sublimity of things natural speaks to us, as has been already observed,[2] of a Person. The awe which we feel at the great sights and sounds of nature—at vast magnitudes, especially abysses[3]—at storm, and thunder, and earthquake—at the raging sea, the boundless plain, the mountain

[1] See Professor Mozley's *Sermon on Nature*, University Sermons, pp. 138–9

[2] See above p. 11.

[3] Burke's *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, Part I. § 7, p. 136.

gloom, the starry sky at night—can only be explained by the fact, that such spectacles suggest to our minds, not only the existence of an Author of nature, but the near presence of the Author of nature, whom they seem to bring before us, and make in a way evident to our senses. It is a true natural instinct that finds utterance by the mouth of the Psalmist when he says:

The near presence as well as the existence of the Author of Nature suggested to us by the great sights of Nature.

"The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters; the voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh."

Psalm xxix. 3–8.

God speaks to us in the great scenes of nature—not literally, but really, in the impressions of awe and solemnity which He has attached to them, and in the sense of His Presence which they produce in us.

Nor does the teaching of the Sublime stop here. Its witness is not merely to the Being of God, but, in some respects, to the character of God. It shows Him to us as majestic, as glorious, as terrible. It also shows Him to us as mysterious. In no other way can material things convey to us impressions of God, except by their having themselves impressed upon them, so far as their nature admits, some similitude to God. The similitude

The Sublime witnesses to the character of God.

can, of course, only be one of analogy; but it may yet be real.

What the Sublime teaches us of God.

"The Great Spirit, speaking by dumb representation to other spirits, intimates and signifies to them something about Himself;"[1]

and that which He intimates by the sublime aspects of nature would seem to be His greatness, His glory, His mysteriousness, and His terribleness.

What the Beautiful teaches us of God.

The teaching of the Beautiful in nature is primarily this—it tells us of the goodness and beneficence of God. That He should not only have contrived the world in such a way that it might best contribute to our use, feed us, clothe us, sustain us, develop our powers, but should also, by an additional and (so to speak) quite unnecessary act, or series of acts, have made it such as to please us, charm us, delight us at every turn, present us with a continual series of agreeable sights and sounds, and so cause us to live, as it were, in a perpetual paradise, is so striking a manifestation of His tender care and loving regard for man, as to evidence in the strongest way His good will, and desire for the happiness of His creatures. Some moderns,[2] — really giving undue weight to one aspect of nature, and overlooking many considerations which mitigate the terror of that aspect— have argued that the consideration of the material

Objection from the terrible in Nature.

[1] Mozley, p. 153.

[2] As John Stuart Mill, in his posthumous *Essays on Nature*, etc.

world in all its parts leads naturally to the horrible conclusion, that God, unless His power be limited, is a malevolent Being. The scope of this Tract forbids our entering on a full discussion of this argument; but we may, in passing, suggest that the most terrible natural catastrophes often work incidentally beneficent results; that on the supposition of there being an all-wise God and Creator, there must be much in His ways that transcends our comprehension, and that we find the complete vindication of His character in the gift and sacrifice of His Son. It would have been impossible to reach the conclusion we are controverting had due weight been allowed to these considerations, as well as to the enormous mass of evidence contradicting it which is presented by the multiform and manifold arrangements in nature having for their object the delectation of man.

How this objection may be met

In the next place, the tendency of natural beauty, and especially of its wide diffusion, is to make us view God with high admiration, as "Wonderful." Considered as a machinery contrived for our benefit and advantage, the world excites a certain interest, provokes a certain gratitude, which is yielded with calmness and without enthusiasm. But the beauty which is in the world entrances and enthrals men, takes possession of their minds, arouses the strongest possible sentiment of admiring rapture. The natural outcome of such a state of feeling is

The contemplation of the beautiful in nature excites praise.

praise. It is the contemplation of nature in this light that produces the outburst:—

Outburst of praise produced by the contemplation of nature.

"Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him, all His angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts; praise ye Him, sun and moon: praise ye Him, all ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for He commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling His word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men, and children; let them praise the name of the Lord; for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven; He also exalteth the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him. Praise ye the Lord."—Psa. cxlviii. 1–14.

The analogy to the Divine nature in beauty.

Further, when we ask ourselves, What is this beauty in things natural which charms us so, and whence does it derive its power to charm? one answer only seems possible. There must be in beauty itself some analogy to the Divine nature. It is impossible that so much water, air, earth, foliage, etc., could impress us, as the beautiful scenes of nature do, merely in themselves, without reference to something further, something out of themselves, which is above them, and beyond them, and which they resemble. But what can there be, which material beauty resembles, in God, who is immaterial, who is a pure Spirit, "without parts or

body," as "without passions"? Now here a clue is perhaps given by the expression of the Hebrew poet, "Worship the Lord in the *beauty of holiness*." [1] The Hebrew poet sees a "beauty" in "holiness." He recognises the fact that there is a resemblance between them. And this instinctive feeling of his is corroborated by the Greeks, in whom the sense of beauty and appreciation of the beautiful in nature were more delicate, acute, and vivid than in any other nation. As has been well said—

The beauty of holiness.

> "All their outer environment worked with the inner acuteness and activity of the Hellenic mind to make beauty a chief object of life—to make the beautiful so near a symbol of the good as to be identifiable with the good, and with Him, the Theion, who was, or in whom was, all good. The words good and beautiful were hardly distinguished; and the combination, καλὸς κἀγαθός, denoted all that man or woman could be in nature, character, and conduct." [2]

Nor is modern instinctive feeling at variance with these views. It is impossible to describe natural beauty in our own or in any other modern language without continually borrowing from the vocabulary of morality, and introducing into our description such terms as lovely, noble, pure, tender, subtle, delicate, glorious, happy, grave, solemn—terms of constant recurrence in any ethical treatise. All this is evidence of a natural and real similitude of

Natural beauty described in terms derived from the vocabulary of morality.

[1] Psa. xcvi. 9.

[2] Rev. R. St. J. Tyrwhitt's *Natural Theology of Natural Beauty*, pp. 61, 62.

things physical to things moral, and justifies us in reflecting back upon the Author of Nature, the one perfect moral Being, the ideas which we derive from the contemplation of what is admirable in nature, only transferring them from a physical to a moral sense. Once admit that natural beauty is symbolical of God, and it will read us lessons at every turn on the tenderness, the harmony, the purity, the solemnity, the nobility, the glory of the Infinite Being.

Natural beauty reads us lessons on the character and glory of God.

III.

Such, in the main, appear to us to be the religious teachings of natural beauty and sublimity. It remains to consider whether this teaching is addressed to mankind at large, or only to a select few.

The feeling for natural beauty widespread.

It is in favour of the position that the feeling for natural beauty and sublimity is very widely spread among men, that we find, almost from the first dawn of history, indications of the appreciation of both amongst the most remote and unconnected nations. The artistic attempts of the cave-dwellers of Auvergne and elsewhere show that the beauty of certain animal forms had impressed even those rude specimens of early humanity. Egyptian colossi, Assyrian bulls and lions, indicate a sense of the sublime. The constant introduction of

the lotus into Pharaonic ornament, and its universal employment at Egyptian banquets, imply a warm admiration of that queen of flowers. An intense appreciation of the grand and majestic in nature is revealed in the Book of Job. The Song of Solomon is full of touches which show the author to have had a strong feeling for nature's softer side. Hellenic enjoyment of natural beauty is generally allowed, and may be traced back to the times when their Aryan ancestors wandered through Indian forests, or fed their flocks on Bactrian hills. Everywhere among the records of early man, in Hindoo rock-temples, Chinese pagodas, Buddhist topes, Scythian tombs, Aztec cities, we find proof in the imitation of natural forms that their beauty was felt and acknowledged by men.

Appreciation of the grand and majestic in Book of Job and of the beautiful in the Song of Solomon.

The sense of the beautiful universal among early men.

The appreciation of the sublime and beautiful by moderns will scarcely be disputed; and is certainly widespread, at any rate through the upper and middle ranks of life. It has recently been noted as

> "rather a new feature of the world—the popular pursuit of natural beauty, the inoculation of the crowd with it; the subject entering so much into people's thoughts, and being made so much a business of." [1]

Modern appreciation of the sublime and beautiful.

Almost everybody travels; and the general object of the travel is to visit scenes of natural beauty and sublimity, and to obtain the satisfaction of contemplating them. Such satisfaction would

[1] Mozley, *Sermon on Nature*, p. 140.

appear to be keen from the trouble taken to secure it, and the persistency with which men pursue the object year after year. Novelty is not greatly sought. The same scenes are frequently re-visited; and as much delight appears to be felt on the tenth visit as on the first. The susceptibility to pleasurable impressions from nature would seem to increase rather than diminish by its exercise; while the growing number of travellers implies that the attraction is continually drawing fresh classes within the sphere of its influence.

The popularity of landscape paintings and Nature poets.

Other indications of wide-spread appreciation of natural beauty are the great popularity which landscape-painting and landscape-paintings now enjoy, and also the popularity of the school of Nature poets. Only those who delight in the objects themselves can take pleasure in their representations, whether these be produced by the employment of lines and colours, or by the word-painting and descriptive power of imaginative writers. The thousands who frequent exhibitions, where the bulk of the pictures are landscapes, and the tens, or rather hundreds of thousands, who feel the charm of the prose of Ruskin, or the descriptive poetry of Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Clough, Tennyson, are strong evidence of the extent to which men are at the present time open to receive pleasurable impressions from the sublimity and beauty of things natural.

Still, the question may be raised, whether the susceptibility to the impressions whereof we have been speaking extends to all sections of society; whether they are or are not a portion of our common humanity, as much a portion of it as those social and moral instincts which are generally regarded as universal. In favour of this view we have the assertions of some poets, whom we must suppose, as poets, to have studied humanity; for instance, of Akenside, who says:

The extent of the susceptibility.

Akenside's view.

> Ask the swain
> Who journeys homeward from a summer day's
> Long labour, why, forgetful of his toils
> And due repose, he loiters to behold
> The sunset gleaming, as through amber clouds,
> O'er all the western sky. Full well I ween
> His rude expression and untutored airs
> Beyond the power of language will display
> The form of Beauty, smiling at his heart—
> How lovely! How delightful!

It is difficult to gauge the feelings of the peasant class, who are rarely demonstrative, and who speak a language different from ours; but, so far as our own observation extends, we should say that Akenside has fairly represented the fact of a susceptibility on the part of such persons to natural beauty, when it is of a marked and striking kind.

Admiration of nature displayed by Burns and Hogg.

Confirmation is lent to this opinion by the further fact that rustic poets, such as Burns and Hogg, when they attain the power of expressing themselves in song, exhibit a keen sympathy with

nature, and a warm admiration of her in almost all her aspects. Such persons are to be regarded as exceptions, not so much from the general level of their class, in respect of feelings and ideas, as in the power of expressing such feelings and ideas in language that is at once poetic and intelligible to the literary world. They give us the sentiments generally prevalent in the rank of life from which they have sprung. What is peculiar to them is the gift of embodying those sentiments in words.

The feelings of their class find voice in their song.

Against the views here advocated have to be set the weighty words of one whose love of nature is indisputable, and whose powers of observation are great. Professor Ruskin, in one of the most interesting chapters of his principal work,[1] sets himself to consider what actual effect upon the human race has been produced by the continual exhibition before their eyes of the utmost grandeur and beauty whereof nature is susceptible. He selects the district which borders the course of the Trient, between Valorsine and Martigny, as possessing, more than almost any other, a pure or uninterrupted fulness of mountain character, and an accumulation of natural beauties scarcely found elsewhere in such intensity and such profusion. After a most magnificent and most truthful description of the region in question, he comes to the consideration of its influence on the minds and

Professor Ruskin's adverse opinion.

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. xix. pp. 325–9.

character of the inhabitants, and this is the conclusion at which he arrives:—

Opinion of Professor Ruskin.

"The traveller on his happy journey, as his foot springs from the deep turf and strikes the pebbles gaily over the edge of the mountain road, sees with a glance of delight the clusters of nut-brown cottages that nestle among those sloping orchards and glow beneath the boughs of the pines. Here, it may well seem to him, if there be sometimes hardship, there must be at least innocence and peace, and fellowship of the human soul with nature. It is not so. The wild goats that leap along those rocks have as much passion of joy in all that fair work of God as the men that toil among them. Perhaps more. Enter the street of one of those villages, and you will find it foul with that gloomy foulness that is suffered only by torpor, or by anguish of soul. Here it is torpor,—not absolute suffering,—not starvation or disease, but darkness of calm enduring; the spring known only as the time of the scythe, and the autumn as the time of the sickle, and the sun only as a warmth, the wind as a chill, and the mountains as a danger. They do not understand so much as the name of beauty . . . .

"Do not let this be thought a darkened picture of the life of these mountaineers. It is a literal fact. No contrast can be more painful than that between the dwelling of any well-conducted English cottager and that of the equally honest Savoyard . . . . all testify that to the inhabitant [of the latter] the world is labour and vanity: that for him neither flowers bloom, nor birds sing, nor fountains glisten; and that his soul hardly differs from the grey cloud that coils and dies upon his hills, except in having no fold of it touched by the sunbeams."

Consequences of it.

Now, if this be a true picture, and not only true but typical—if, that is, it represents the ordinary condition of those who inhabit the regions where nature is at once grandest and loveliest—and otherwise the picture was not worth presenting in such marvellous vividness and with such extreme elaboration, then we must necessarily conclude that

a large part of humanity, all the more rude and uncultivated classes, are insensible to natural beauty, and, by necessary consequence, without the range of its teaching. Such a view is too painful to be embraced readily. May we not set against it, not only the general arguments already adduced in favour of a universal sense of the beautiful, but the following specific considerations?

Objections to it.

Patriotism of mountaineers.

(*a*) The inhabitants of the glorious mountain regions especially favoured by nature are notoriously among the most patriotic of mankind, and the most attached to their national independence. Mountain tribes have always been among the greatest difficulties of conquerors. The Greeks, the Pisidians, the Iberians, the Swiss, the Scotch, the races of the Caucasus, are cases in point; and historians have always accounted for their intense love of country, in part at least, by their appreciation of the scenic charms surrounding them. Is this to be viewed as a mistake? If not, it must be allowed that the mass of men in such regions have a feeling for the natural beauties among which they live, note them, value them, delight in them.

Home-sickness of the Swiss.

(*b*) What is to be said of the well-known *maladie de pays*, or home-sickness, to which the Swiss are so liable? Has it ever been developed, so as to attract attention, among the inhabitants of tame, dull, and common-place regions, like the Low

Countries, or Central Lombardy? or is it not altogether confined to the dwellers in more favoured lands, and among them is it not an affection from which all, even the most uncultivated, are apt to suffer? Surely a strong witness is borne to men's appreciation of natural scenery, when absence from it, if prolonged, causes them to pine and waste away, to grow weary of life, and sometimes actually to expire.

Love of beauty in children.

(*c*) Is there not an appreciation of beauty, universally, in children? Do not bright colours, "pretty things," please them? If in after life the sense of beauty is in any cases absent, has it not decayed, died out, fallen away? A hard life, a constant struggle with grinding poverty, may deaden men's natural sensibility; a debasing religion may possibly do the same. If there are instances of individuals, or communities, who "do not understand so much as the name of beauty," are there not others who seem to have no moral sense? As it would be generally held that, in the latter case, the moral sense has been gradually deadened and lost, so is it not most probable that a similar loss has occurred in the former.

Deadening influences in the case of adults.

Sense of the beautiful universal.

We believe, then, that the sense of the beautiful is universal, and that all classes—nay, all persons—are, or have been, more or less open to its influence.

CONCLUSION.

The world's witness to God.

The result is, that God has placed us in a world which witnesses of Him in two ways. It is a world of manifold and most marvellous contrivances and, so far, exhibits Him to us as a Mechanician of extraordinary skill and power, working moreover with the manifest design of advancing man's bodily and social interests. It is also a world of intense and varied beauty and sublimity, so arranged as to reflect His image, in a certain sense, and give us an adumbration of Him. It is not His body, as Aristotle thought; far less is it He Himself, as Pantheists teach; but it is

The world a revelation of God in type and similitude.

"a revelation of the character of God in the way of material type and similitude."[1]

"The invisible things of Him may be from the creation of the world clearly seen, and *understood by the things that are made;*"[2] we may walk in the midst of this world of His, not thereby shut out from Him, but seeing Him on all sides. The beauty which some would elevate into a religion, is no religion in itself; but it tells of religion. It speaks of a God, who has impressed on nature, as far as was possible, shadows of His attributes, and constituted many objects—the Rock, the Vine, etc. —symbols of His Son, who is the brightness of His

[1] Mozley, *Sermon on Nature*, p. 151. [2] Rom. i. 20.

glory and the express image of His person, by whom also He made the worlds. It speaks of His perfection, of His glory, of His worthiness to absorb us, and fill us with a passion of love. To rest in beauty, without going further and tracing it to its source, is to miss much of the teaching which it was intended to convey, and to act as one who should be so captivated by the graceful lines and lovely tints of a splendid picture, that he should fail to ask himself—"What does it mean? What does it represent?" It is to stop short where God intended us to reach forward. It is to forget that though the sublimity and beauty of nature may please the imagination, and even refine and exalt it, they cannot in themselves affect the soul, or change the heart. It is only when we "look through nature up to nature's God," that we reach the real teachings of nature, and hear her true voice.

What beauty speaks of.

The meaning and teaching of natural beauty.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."—*Psalm* xix. 1-7.

How we reach the real teachings of nature and hear her true voice.

ERNEST RENAN

AND HIS

CRITICISM OF CHRIST

BY THE

REV. W. G. ELMSLIE, M.A.

Argument of the Tract.

RENAN'S importance is sketched as an orientalist, historian, philosopher, and religious critic. His publication of personal memoirs, meant to justify his scepticism, is a challenge to analysis and valuation of his mental and spiritual character. The process is peculiarly interesting and useful, because his personality plays so large a part in shaping his historical conceptions and criticism. His construction of Christ's history is shown to be based on an untenable critical foundation, deformed by a sensuousness of tone wholly foreign to the theme, and structurally vitiated by an idea, which is at once an inversion of the gospel story, and a contradiction of the faith and life of Christendom. The forces, that have thus biassed his understanding of Christ, are found to be his philosophical preconceptions, which are substantially those of Hegelian Pantheism. The genesis of his unbelief is traced in the influences of his childhood and youth, and his assertion of its purely critical origin is disproved. Three chief causes are described. There was, first of all, the impotence of the theology he was taught. To that must be added his mental idiosyncracy, which is so intensely artistic, that the craving for effect overmasters the sense of fact and love of truth. Morally and spiritually he seems never to have had that living faith, which gives the soul a real possession of a personal God, and he appears to come significantly short in practical sense of human brotherhood. The radical error of his character and criticism is an intense intellectual egoism, driving him to renounce the hope of finding real truth in actual existence, where alone it is to be found. Thus he has missed the reward of those, who, content to seek truth amid life's risks and limitations, reach at last through pain and peril a nobler and a surer faith.

ERNEST RENAN

AND HIS

CRITICISM OF CHRIST.

RNEST RENAN, Professor of Hebrew in the *Collége de France*, is one of the typical figures of our time. Though not the most formidable antagonist of Christianity, he is probably the most prominent. In the cold scrutiny of scientific theology his imaginative criticism does indeed lack weight, but in the literary and fashionable *salons* of Europe his brilliant fancy, and the exquisite beauty of his inimitable style, have secured him a vast audience and a quite incalculable influence. In our own country his writings have attracted universal attention, and in the controversy between faith and criticism he is quoted as an authority, not only in the more cultured organs of unbelief, but also in the lowest organs of secularism. He is a man of great erudition, of ceaseless industry, possessed of the most versatile tastes and talents, and withal somewhat of a magnificent *dilettante*.

Renan's representative character and position.

His influence

Learning and genius

Though of inferior calibre, he strikingly resembles in character and genius the great sceptic of the eighteenth century, and he has been termed, not inaptly, the Voltaire of the nineteenth.

His place in Oriental research

In his special department of Oriental learning, besides many clever monographs, he has written an elaborate *History of the Semitic Languages*, which was marked by rare powers of exposition, but marred by hasty generalization and fanciful hypotheses. The work has recently been entirely re-modelled. His commentaries on *Job*, *Canticles*, and *Ecclesiastes* are full of poetic feeling, ingenious suggestion, and fantastic interpretation. The narrative of his *Mission to Phœnicia*, and the splendid *Collection of Semitic Inscriptions*, are the best and most solid results of his Oriental labours.

In biography and history.

In the realms of biography, history, and philosophy, M. Renan has also produced much that is remarkable. He has written ably on French history, and in particular on the art and literature of the fourteenth century. Celtic life and poetry he has delineated with sympathy and beauty. His essays on *Averroes*, *Mahomet*, *Spinoza*, and other subjects, are all the work of an accomplished artist and scholar, though his information is not always first-hand, nor are his inferences invariably reliable.

In philosophy.

In his *Philosophical Dialogues* he appears in a new dress, but with the old qualities and defects. The greatest problems of life and faith are discussed

with an extraordinary combination of penetration and flippancy, with a mixture of sentiment and irony that might flow from the pen of a paternal Mephistopheles.

His pretensions as a critic of Christianity.

It is, however, by his *History of the Origins of Christianity* that Renan has won his peculiar reputation and unique religious significance in our age. The work opens with an account of Christ's character and career. The Apostolic age is next described in three volumes. The second generation of the Church is dealt with in a subsequent volume, and two more bring us to Marcus Aurelius and the end of M. Renan's historical undertaking.[1] His purpose is to explain the rise and success of the Christian religion by purely natural causes, and he carries out his design sincerely and relentlessly, sparing the fair fame of neither Christ nor His followers. It is a daring and a dangerous enterprise. He has taken his seat in the tribunal of criticism, and has pronounced judgment on Christ and Christendom.

His responsibility.

[1] The volumes of the *Histoire des Origines du Christianisme* are as follows:—*Vie de Jésus; Les Apôtres; Saint Paul; L'Antichrist; Les Evangiles; L'Eglise Chrétienne: Marc Aurèle et la Fin du Monde Antique.* The *Vie de Jésus* was very considerably altered in its thirteenth edition. Since then the text has remained unchanged. It is this edition from which our quotations will be taken.

PART I.

Preliminary Considerations.

The personal element in criticism.

The verdicts of criticism in the realm of religion are, partly of choice and partly of necessity, to a large extent subjective. They are not so much decisions based on proof as opinions of experts. The critic's divining rod is aptly described in the aphorism—

So redt' ich wenn ich Christus wär'.

Armed with this singularly handy rule-of-thumb —"Had I been Christ, I should have spoken thus"—the critic proceeds confidently to sift the Gospel records, and to reconstruct the history of Jesus. There must ever be a close connexion between character and creed. Says Göethe—

Connexion of character and creed.

"Wie einer ist, so ist sein Gott,
Darum wird Gott so oft zum Spott."

"As is a man, so is his God,
That's why so often God's a thing of scorn."

When a man undertakes to manufacture a god, he will naturally make him in his own image, and the dignity of the deity will depend on the moral magnitude of the maker. The critic, who makes himself the measure of Christ, compels scrutiny of the standard, and thus constitutes his personal character part of the question. In most cases the

Value of the one will vary with that of the other

investigation is limited by lack of material, and public discussion is proscribed by considerations of delicacy. In the case of M. Renan, both restrictions have been by his own act removed. In a volume of *Reminiscences*,[1] which has recently appeared, he has delineated his character, and described the process of his unbelief, for the purpose of exhibiting his mental, moral, and spiritual fitness to be the biographer of Jesus. In other words, he has wished to support his critical testimony, and has elected to put in evidence his personal character. The course he has chosen lays on us the duty of cross-examination. He has affirmed his competence to criticise Christ. Reticence on our part would mean acquiescence in the claim. We have no choice but to join issue, to check the affirmation, and to publish to the world our judgment of approval or condemnation.

Renan has published his personal history in support of his criticism

This act makes cross-examination a duty.

The purpose of this tract is, therefore, to examine the merits and demerits of Renan's criticism; to determine the powers and the limits of his mental and moral nature; and to exhibit the relation which subsists between his critical theories and his personal character. The task is difficult and delicate. M. Renan is a wit and a literary conjuror. It is

Purpose of the tract is to examine his criticism and character, and to exhibit their relation and value.

[1] *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, 1883. An English translation is published by Chapman and Hall, under the title *Recollections of my Youth*. By E. Renan. Our quotations are taken from the sixth French edition, and have been carefully translated, so as to reproduce the author's meaning accurately.

Difficulty of the task.

not always easy to tell whether he is in jest or in earnest. His real opinions are hard to get at. They are constantly concealed under a mask of raillery; or is it the absence of any definite convictions that is covered by his irony? Anyway, it is not our fault if he suffers for his lack of seriousness in the handling of life's most solemn problems. When Rome was burning, Nero was fiddling—only fiddling; yet Renan has held him up to the world's censure on a pillory of merciless invective.[1] We are well aware that there is often beneath his giddiest paradoxes grave thought and very weighty truth, and it may be that behind the Renan jesting there is sometimes a Renan sorrowing, perchance relenting. It is our painful duty to lay bare and make prominent the poorer parts of his nature in this tract. It is our wish to say the hard things that must be said with all fairness, and in all kindness. M. Renan is himself one of the most generous of enemies, and the most placable of foes. He possesses under attack a degree of imperturbable good temper, that is almost that of an irresponsible being. There is no man of whom it is harder to say hard things; yet we doubt if there is any kind of character whose influence is more fatal to the moral fibre of society. This judgment we are bound to maintain; but, if in the discussion anything is put too harshly, or

Plain speaking inevitable.

Deprecation of unfairness.

[1] *L'Antichrist.*

construed unjustly, through partiality or misconception, we desire in advance to protest our innocence of unjust intention, to express regret, and to crave pardon.

Renan's past and present.

Forty years ago Renan was, by his own account, a simple-minded and serious student of theology. He has developed into a chronic sceptic, whose settled attitude to men and their Maker is that of good-humoured irony.[1] The course he chose at the outset of his life was one that to his youthful mind seemed to point only to despair; but now, in the ripe autumn of his years, he tells us that he has found the end of that path to be peace. He sailed away beneath the starless skies and across the stormy seas of a creedless criticism, and on the dismal shores of universal doubt he has found for his soul a sure haven and quiet resting-place. It is a strange metamorphosis, and a remarkable ending—if it be the end.

Vaunted serenity of unbelief belied by its unrest.

It is a custom of sceptics to tell us of their serenity. Doubtless, there is a peace that is the peculiar property of unbelief. But it is not always those who proclaim it most, who most possess it. Else how comes it that we have so many autobiographies of doubters? What is the necessity laid on them to give to the world a reason for the faith that is not in them? Is it not an unacknowledged need to justify themselves to themselves,

[1] *Souvenirs*, pp 152, 374.

Need of self-justification.

and to the world? In truth, it is not easy for a man to turn without misgiving from the Christ; and it is still harder to maintain the denial. Possible it is, if a man will go clean away from the Master he has denied, so as to be beyond eye-sight and ear-shot. But, if a man will not go away out of reach and touch, into the outer world of material interests; if he choose to stay still in that judgment-hall of criticism, where age after age Christ stands arraigned; if he will thus remain within reach of those eyes, that from the cross look down through the centuries, it is difficult under that appealing gaze to persist in a denial, that shall not sometimes be ruffled with regrets, and disturbed with storms of deep disquietude.

Hence the memoirs of doubters.

The memoirs of the great doubters are monuments of this difficulty. They have all of them, more or less, the character of a defence. It was so with Rousseau, with Gibbon, with Hume. It was so in our day with Harriet Martineau and with John Stuart Mill; and it is so with M. Renan. With all his serene irony, he too has succumbed to the necessity of expression and of explanation. While

Renan's *Reminiscences* are an *apologia*.

he tells the tales of his boyhood, and paints the old-world life of his Breton home, his style has all its silvery sweetness and wonted Virgilian repose. But when he comes to recite the history of his scepticism, the narrative insensibly acquires the accents of polemic, and the story becomes

an actual, though an unavowed, *Apologia pro vitâ suâ.*

Singular candour of the revelations.

In the autobiographical volume which he has lately published, Renan gives a singularly candid account of the shipwreck of his faith. In a panorama of living pictures he makes pass before our eyes the scenes of his boyhood, and the successive stages of his pilgrimage from belief to denial. He does more. He shows us his inmost heart, and lays bare the most secret springs of his character with a frankness that is almost astounding. It is not often that a living author serves himself up in this fashion as a feast for critics. Carlyle caused it to be done, after he was dead, and the public has been edified by the revelation. M. Renan has not cared to abide posthumous appreciation. He wishes himself to share the feast, to play the host, and it must be owned he does the honours of his person with unstinted hospitality. Our reserve need not exceed our entertainer's. M. Renan wishes to be discussed, with approval, if possible, but still to be discussed. With a child's love of notice, he had rather be cursed with bell, book, and candle, than consigned to the corner of cold oblivion. Moreover, the book is more than an invitation to criticism. It is a challenge. The author has published to the world a balance-sheet of his merits and his demerits. The world has a right to audit it. He

Absence of all reserve.

Invites unreserved criticism.

Indeed challenges it

is aware of the ordeal, and accepts it. He has appealed to the bar of public judgment, and awaits the verdict—not without confidence.

Value of the disclosure.

It was the wish of the patriarch Job, that his enemy would write a book. It is still the wish of sagacious Christians. An unknown foe is always formidable; if not in fact, at least in fancy. Before accepting opinions, it is well to weigh arguments. It is still better, if we can, to weigh authors. In the case of M. Renan, the precaution is possible, and peculiarly proper.

Renan's historical method intensely subjective.

Renan is a historian, but he is one *sui generis*. He does not write history; he thinks it. His genius is not content to recover and record the life of byegone ages; he re-creates it. With him history-making is a fine art. Nay, it is almost an organic function. The result is not a manufactured article; it is a personal product. His genius secretes history, as the spider does its web. For him it is not enough to search documents, sift traditions, weigh witnesses, and interpret facts. But he swallows documents, traditions, witnesses, facts, and, in the absence of facts, probabilities. This raw material he digests in imagination, thickens the compound with conjectures, suffuses the whole with suitable sentiment, and in the end, like Minerva from the head of Jove, history springs full-formed from his prolific brain.[1] The result is

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. xvii., *et passim.*

a sort of history, our author acknowledges, which may well lack accuracy in matters of fact, but which possesses a higher kind of verity, which is superior to naked truth, inasmuch as it is truth rendered vocal and expressive truth raised to the power of an idea, and the possession of a soul.[1] The process is proper, and the product legitimate. Only we do not call it history. We call it romance. Its merits are not scientific, but literary; and its value will vary with the worth of the idea embodied, and the moral magnitude of him from whom its soul was derived. This process Renan has applied to the life of Christ and the origins of Christianity. It is matter for congratulation that we have at the hands of the historian an authentic account of his spiritual stature, and the measure of his mental and moral manhood.

His history is pervaded by his personality

Consequent importance of possessing his measure.

PART II.

Renan's Critical Construction of Christ.

Twenty years ago Renan published his celebrated *Vie de Jésus*. The book was brilliant in style, and strikingly bold in structure. The Redeemer of mankind appeared as the hero of a romance. The volume sold by hundreds. It was anathematised by the Pope. The sale rose to thousands. It is a perplexing anomaly, that ecclesiastical censures are

The *Vie de Jesus*.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. xciii.

so often fated to miss the heretic's punishment, and turn to his pecuniary profit.

The critical basis is destitute of solidity.

In these days every new construction of Christ and His religion must base itself on a careful and complete criticism of the evangelical records. The stability of the historical edifice depends absolutely on the strength of the critical foundation. It is precisely here, that Renan's weakness is, if not most conspicuous, at all events most calamitous. Criticism in any truly scientific sense he has none. His power lies not in weighing evidence, but in imaginative creation of character. His criticism is a thing of crotchet and caprice, frequently illumined by flashes of fine fancy, but destitute of system and consistency, living from hand to mouth, and capable at any moment of being disowned by its author. It is the legitimate offspring of the Romish casuistry, and scholastic apologetic, which he was taught in his youth. It has no organic structure, nor any fixed standards. Renan does well to reproach the Tübingen school with driving its theories to extremes; but it has at least an idea, and possesses intelligible principles. Renan applies but one test of reliability to Gospel statements, and that is their compatibility with his conception of Christ's character. That conception has for its first axiom the affirmation that nothing supernatural has ever happened. The principle is trenchant, and, honestly applied, makes well nigh

Not the product of scientific principles, but of personal caprice.

Based on an *a priori* denial of the supernatural.

a clean sweep of the contents of the Gospels. For this wholesale eviction of the supernatural the rationalist is ready, but the historian hesitates, for the critic's ruthlessness would be the artist's ruin. The principle is, therefore, applied and—evaded. As much of a gospel narrative as is obnoxious to the rationalist is dismissed with a shake of his head, and as much of it as is convenient for the artist is quietly recovered by some such magical phrase as, "It may be permitted us to believe," or "We cannot but conjecture." Thus what is ostentatiously flung away with one hand is surreptitiously stolen back with the other. The procedure is a little irrational, but the awkwardness is covered by taking care that the critic's right hand should not know what his left hand doeth. The awkwardness is concealed, but the irrationality remains, and its consequences drive M. Renan to strange conclusions. The speeches of St. John's Gospel, with their superhuman assertion, will not cohere with his merely human Jesus, and are, therefore, inadmissible. But our historian cannot afford to lose the graphic incidents and picturesque touches of the narrative in the fourth Gospel. The dilemma is met by the theory, that—

Critical destructiveness checked by artistic conservatism.

Irrationality of the method produces impossible results.

Theory of St. John's Gospel.

"The discourses are almost entirely fictitious, but the narrative portions contain precious traditions springing in part from the Apostle John." [1]

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. xi.

Untenable.

The author of such a desperate make-shift—and indeed he has altered his position several times—shuts his eyes to the fact, that the speeches and the stories are inextricably woven together with the unity of one organic growth; and he does not realise, what Beyschlag has so powerfully shown, that the supreme interest of the writer is not theosophic exposition, but the certainty of an historical fact, to wit, that Jesus of Nazareth is what the discourses of John's Gospel assert him to be. Similarly, in dealing with the miraculous sections of the story, Renan cannot rest with the safer simplicity of the mythical or tendency explanations, for he is bound over to save something from the literary shipwreck. He reverts to the vulgar rationalism of Paulus, and finds natural events under the miraculous dress. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit did not descend, but there was a thunderstorm![1] Lazarus did not die and rise again at Christ's command; but the family at Bethany managed to give out the impression that he had, to the gratification of the disciples and the confusion of the Jews.[2] This process is what is called extracting the historical kernel, and throwing the legendary husk away. Most people will agree with Strauss, when he contemptuously called it

Method of dealing with miracles.

Condemned by Strauss.

"An emptying the child out with the bath."

Either Christ's life must be written so as to include

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. xix. [2] *Ibid*, pp. 508–516.

what we are in the habit of calling miracle, or it cannot be written at all. Renan's attempt to make good the gaps left by rationalism with the artist's salvage from the historical shipwreck, is, like all its predecessors, a miserable failure. A partial reviewer, who rates him as, perhaps, the greatest teacher of our time, Mr. Myers, is nevertheless driven, in speaking on this point, to use language of remarkable strength. Talking of attempts to account naturally for the apostles' faith in Jesus' resurrection, he proceeds:

Renan's attempt is, like its predecessors, a failure.

Opinion of a friendly critic.

"Nor will men continue to believe—if anybody besides M. Renan believes it now—that the faithful were indeed again and again convinced that their risen Master was standing visibly among them, but thought this because there was an accidental noise, or a puff of air, or even an *étrange miroitement*, an atmospheric effect. An *étrange miroitement!* Paley's Evidences is not a subtle book, nor a spiritual book. But one wishes that the robust Paley with his 'twelve men of known probity' were alive again to deal with hypotheses like this. The Apostles were not so much like a British jury as Paley imagined them. But they were more like a British jury than like a parcel of hysterical monomaniacs. [1]

The popularity of the work was due to its scientific blemishes even more than to its literary beauties. In respect of style and taste its cardinal offence is a certain luscious sensuality of tone and colour. The author lingers over the luxuriant loveliness of Galilee with an almost voluptuous enjoyment. Beauty of body, sweetness of voice

The book's faults in tone and taste.

Sensuousness.

[1] *Modern Essays.* By F. W. H. Myers. 1883.

luring languor of look and gesture, appetites and instincts bodily and sensual are promoted to play an unwonted rôle in the drama of redemption. The worshipping love that encircled the Saviour is eagerly caught, and in Renan's fleshly fancy it is fondled into a flame, that burns with the forbidden glow of earthly passion. We are told of the extraordinary sweetness of Jesus' voice, the infinite charm that exhaled from his person, the fascination of his ravishing face, till we ask in wonder how this gentle, girlish Christ could have been mistaken for the grim Baptist or Elijah, or some one of the stern old prophets. In the agony of Gethsemane the Jesus of Renan is thinking with regret of the clear fountains of Galilee, the shady vines and fig-trees, and the maidens who might have consented to love Him.[1] The world's faith in the Lord's resurrection was, in Renan's opinion, the creation of Mary's love-sick heart, that dreamt her Master back to life again.

In description of Jesus and His friends.

Gethsemane.

Resurrection.

"Divine might of love!" exclaims Renan; "moments for ever sacred, when the passion of an hysterical woman gave to the world a risen God!"[2]

The whole book is pervaded with the same poisoned perfume. It is not the breath of the Galilean flowers. It is not the breeze of the Judean hills. But its sickly scent is familiar enough in the tainted atmosphere of Paris salons.

An artistic blunder and a moral outrage.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. 391. [2] *Ibid*, p. 449.

Besides these faults of form, there is a fundamental fault of structure in Renan's conception of Christ. It was a favourite theory of Feuerbach's, that the Christian dogmas were inverted truths. They were verities standing on their heads. To get them right, they had simply to be turned upside down. Renan has employed this short and summary method with Christendom's conception of the character and work of its Divine founder. The Gospels picture the career of Jesus as a constant growth in inner sanctity and outer moral grandeur, till it reached its climax of trial and triumph in the grief and glory of Calvary. It has been reserved for M. Renan to discern, that in truth the course of Jesus was not an ascent, but a descent; not a progression, but a moral declension. According to the French professor, Jesus was a simple and sublime enthusiast, in whose pure soul the splendid truth of God's Fatherhood, with its gracious consequence of human brotherhood, had dawned, and awakened an intoxicating dream of a kingdom of heaven on earth, in which men should be all good, and sin and sorrow known no more. He was content at first in happy Galilee to preach his fair vision and dream of its advent. But, roused by a visit to Jerusalem to the rude contrast between his sweet ideal and the stern facts of life, he formed the fatal resolve to translate his dream paradise into reality. The enthusiast

Fatal fault of structure.

Renan's conception of Christ's career is an inversion of history and fact.

Jesus a pure and simple religious enthusiast.

Dream of a kingdom of heaven on earth.

Determines to try and realize it.

passed over into the agitator. Henceforth, says Renan, the simple soul of the Galilean Jesus must tread the less pure paths of the Judean Christ. Great deeds are not done without the use of fraud and force. The ideal finds itself face to face with stupidity that will be deceived, and of hostility that must be crushed.

Is driven to use fraud and violence.

> "The one quite stainless life is that of the thinker, who seeks only to find truth, without caring to make it conquer, or to carry it into practice."[1]

In other words dreaming good is safe: doing good is demoralizing. The doctrine is startling, but its author is sincere. He practices what he preaches. He has consistently eschewed the temptation to be a practical Saint or Saviour to mankind, and has remained amid the world's sin and sorrow a good-humoured, though ironical, spectator.[2] Jesus did not possess such fortitude. In the opinion of Renan, he made the mistake of pitying men, and wishing to be a real Saviour. The tools he had to use stained his hands. The mob demanded miracles: the disciples contrived them; and Christ connived. Maddened by the unbroken hostility of the rulers, driven daily to more desperate expedients to retain the flagging faith of the populace, with the limpidity of his conscience lost, the sweetness of his nature soured, Jesus sought escape from an inextricable situation by the sacrifice of his life,

Finds himself in an inextricable situation.

Seeks escape in a martyr's death.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p xxix. [2] *Souvenirs*, p. 149.

and expiated an amiable but fatal blunder by a martyr's death. Says Renan:

His career was thus a moral declension, though a material success, and its spiritual legacy to mankind is the Galilean Gospel.

"Beyond all doubt never was Christianity more perfect than during its first days in Galilee. Jesus added nothing to it. What do I say? He compromised it."[1]

So then Christ's supreme service to our lost world was his Galilean Gospel of the kingdom of heaven,—

"A dream so beautiful," says our author, "that humanity has lived on it ever since, and still our best consolation is to breathe its fading sweetness."[2]

The theory contradicts the faith and life of Christendom which centre round Christ's cross.

The theory is plausible and complete. But it contradicts alike the faith and the life of Christendom. For it was not the Galilean preaching, but precisely that cross of Calvary, which Renan calls the escape from a mistake, that won the world's worship, and has wrought humanity's redemption. For in that awful death men thought they saw the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man set forth not in doctrine, but in deed;—the Divine Father giving His best-beloved Son to lay down His life for His brethren. It told them that the inmost nature of God's being is love—love paternal. In the Godhead an everlasting Fatherhood holds in its bosom an everlasting Sonship.[3] Along this perfect tie of tenderness the Divine Fatherliness overflows into creation,[4] and in humanity, made in God's image, finds, as it were, a lower kind of son-

Christ's Passion is the supreme revelation of divine fatherhood and human brotherhood.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. 96.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 87.
[3] John i. 18.
[4] John i. 3.

Man's dignity and relation to God.

ship. Thus man stands linked to God by love. Love carries in its bosom an essential necessity of vicarious joying and sorrowing. While mankind remained sinless, human goodness was heaven's gladness. When humanity sinned, man's guilt became God's grief—since for perfect holiness to suffer sin, is to suffer. This Divine abhorrence of sin made itself felt on earth, passing from the heart of God into the hearts of men, and emerging in that long conflict with evil, which, dating from the primeval promise of grace, stretches on through the generations, at once the preparation and the prophecy of the final deliverance. At length, in Jesus the entire redeeming love of God became incarnate, and, in His life of sinless obedience and death of atoning sacrifice, reached its climax and its triumph. Thus in the passion of Christ, men witness Time's most tremendous tragedy. They behold God and man in one, bearing the sin of the world, agonising against death and hell, to carry back to holiness and heaven a world ransomed and renewed. It was this thought of His death that carried Jesus calm and unswerving through all the shame and agony of Calvary. It was this thought, beyond all gainsaying, that inspired the first preachers and martyrs of the gospel of Christ. It was this thought that conquered the old pagan world. It was this thought of Christ's death that inspired the souls of Milton and Dante with visions

Initiation of redemption.

Consummation in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

The supreme place of Christ's death in history.

Its influence on mankind.

Its artistic embodiments.

of majesty, that shall live while the world lasts. But into Renan's picture its splendour will not go; for its radiance enshrines a rôle so superhuman, that none but a Divine Christ can fill it. And Renan's Jesus is human, pitiably human. The rôle must be reduced to the actor's measure. The world's salvation shrivels into the escape from a blunder, and the Divine Redeemer dwindles down into a martyr by mistake. M. Renan may not feel the loss spiritual, but he can measure the loss artistic—he has made a melodrama, and missed a tragedy.

Pitiableness of Renan's portrait.

The loss spiritual measured by the loss artistic.

Renan's *Life of Jesus* is at once a success and a failure. And there is this to be added—it is by its faults that it is a success, and by its merits that it is a failure. It is a success, for it has an effect; it is a failure, for the effect it produces is precisely the effect it ought not to produce. Says a writer in the *Intransigéant*, the organ of M. Rochefort—

The *Vie de Jesus* a literary blunder.

Produces the wrong effect.

"Renan's work is of its kind unique. For instance in his Life of Jesus, by a prodigy of artistic skill and æsthetic sensuality, he makes you feel as if rocked in a hammock, while you read the story of the Crucified!"[1]

An under-current of similar irony ran through Strauss's diplomatically-worded welcome of the book. He said it had faults, but only one fatal flaw; and though it could not convince himself, and was not suited to German minds, it was for

Ambiguous praise of Strauss.

[1] *Intransigéant* of 29 June, 1883.

that very reason the better adapted to satisfy the minds of Frenchmen.[1] Compliments of this kind are not encouraging. But Renan is a writer of fortitude. In his last utterance he says cheerfully and ingenuously—

Renan's own opinion.

> "I am the only man of my time, that has been able to comprehend Jesus and Francis of Assisi."[2]

Cause of the failure is philosophical preconception.

The cause of Renan's failure to find in the Gospels the Divine Christ of Christendom, is not criticism, as he supposes, for criticism in the scientific sense of the word he has little, but it is philosophical preconception. Jesus said, "Every man that hath heard the Father cometh unto Me." Renan speaks much of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. The phrase he is fond of; the fact he denies. In his philosophical writings, which have appeared since the *Vie de Jésus*, this is sufficiently manifest. Nowhere in nature has he detected any personal power; he has come in contact with no conscious will; he has felt the beating of no heart Divine. He has not heard the Father. How should he know the Son?[3]

He knows no personal God.

His metaphysical creed.

The philosophy of Renan is hard to define. His metaphysical lucubrations are a singular mixture of piety and paganism. We come on passages that read like the production of a mediæval mystic, and anon on paragraphs that might have flowed from the pen of Epicurus. There is hardly a single

[1] *Leben Jesus*, p. 21 [2] *Souvenirs*, p. 149. [3] John vi. 45.

possible position of speculation that does not find expression in the philosophical utterances of Renan. He is all things by turns, and nothing long. Perhaps the one thing of which he and we are alike certain, is that he has no definite and firmly-held creed. But, if he has no convictions, that does not hinder him from having prepossessions, that are just as potent in shaping his thought, as if they were judgments of the intellect and will. Beneath those appeals to the Celestial Father that abound in his works, beneath those passages that seem to open up vistas of reality in the region of the unseen, beneath all admissions and panegyrics of ideal morality and religion, we come back ever in the last resort to certain cold and confirmed principles of intellectual negation. The constructive, the spiritual, the evangelical elements of his works are thus seen to be due to the exigencies of the artist's imagination, that recoils from the black barrenness of atheism. But the foundation and background of all his airy and beautiful idealism is a very definite and dismal substructure of denial.

Indefinite.

Fundamentally negative.

We should be loath to judge this gifted author unjustly. We are ready to make allowance for his love of paradox, and his quite unexampled indulgence in raillery on a subject of supreme importance. But what conclusion save one is possible from utterances like these :—

His main tenets.

No providential plan in the universe.

"So far from revealing God, nature is immoral. To her good and evil are indifferent. Never has an avalanche arrested itself, in order to spare an upright man; the sunlight has never paled at any crime; death drinks up the blood of the just as of the unjust. History too is a permanent scandal from the point of view of morality. Like nature it reveals laws, but as little as nature does it reveal a plan traced in advance."[1]

Referring to his youthful friendship with M. Berthelot, and their mutual progress in scepticism, he says:—

No divine free-will.

"The affirmation that everything is of the same brand in the world, that there is no particular supernatural, nor special revelation, imposed itself in an absolute fashion on our spirit. The clear scientific view of a universe, in which there acts in an appreciable manner not any free will superior to that of man, became the immoveable anchor, from which we have never been driven. We shall never renounce it, till it is given us to prove in nature the existence of a fact specially designed, having its cause outside the free-will of man, or the spontaneous action of the animals."[2]

Summary of his concep- of the universe.

Thus for Renan the world is a mighty maze, with laws and order, but without a providential plan. Nature, herself immoral, blindly plants in man the instinct of virtue in itself baseless. Conscience is a sort of ruse, and human goodness the produce of a fraud. Religion is a sentiment, immortality a dream; and God a name powerless to modify the moral or material conduct of the universe.

Divine personality denied.

"For myself," writes Renan, "I believe that there is not in the universe an intelligence superior to that of man; the absolute of justice and reason manifests itself only in humanity;

[1] *Dialogues Philosophiques.* [2] *Souvenirs*, p. 337.

regarded apart from humanity, that absolute is but an abstraction; the infinite exists only when it clothes itself in form." [1]

Hegelian Pantheism.

It is the creed of Hegelian Pantheism. It asserts, what alike the science and the sense of our day deny, that life comes from death, intelligence from unintelligence, morality from immorality, and that, in place of God making man, it is really man that makes God. The hollowness of the creed was exposed long ago by Heine. Speaking of the restoration of his faith, he says:—

Heine's estimate of its practica value.

"Yes, I have returned back to God, like the prodigal son, after having for a long time kept swine with the Hegelians. Was it misery that drove me home? Perchance a less miserable reason. A heavenly home-sickness fell upon me, and drove me forth through forests and glens, and across the dizzy mountain pathways of dialectic. By the way I met the God of the Pantheists, but I could make nothing of him. That poor, dreamy being interwoven and entangled in the world, as it were imprisoned in it, gapes out at you will-less and impotent. To have a will, one must be a person; and to manifest it one must have the elbows free. If any man desires a God, that can help—and that is after all the main concern—he must be content to accept his personality, his distinction from the world, and his holy attributes, all goodness, wisdom, righteousness . . . I have spoken of the God of the Pantheists, but I cannot help remarking that he is in fact no God at all, just as the Pantheists really are Atheists ashamed of themselves, dreading not so much the thing, as the shadow it flings on the wall—the name." [2]

[1] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1860.
[2] *Heine, Werke*, xviii. 10

PART III.

Renan's Character Sketched by Himself.

Renan's test of competence to write religious history.

When Renan set out to give the world his theory of Christianity, he laid down a certain formula of competence.

> "No man," said he, "can write the history of a religion, save he who has believed it and now disbelieves it."[1]

The axiom amended.

The apothegm contains two-thirds of the truth. Completed it would run—"Who has believed, disbelieved, and again believed." For none but he who has felt the grief of faith's loss, and the gladness of its recovery, knows the full value and validity of his faith. But it is a question whether Renan possesses even the two-thirds qualification he professes. He presents himself as qualified by past belief and present disbelief.

Doubt whether Renan possesses his own minimum of qualification.

Yet a double doubt assails us, whether he ever did quite believe, and whether he does now quite disbelieve. To exhibit this uncertainty, we must examine the historian's account of his transition from faith to doubt, and from doubt to denial. The narrative is valuable for what it reveals, and still more for what it betrays. We read its direct statements of fact in the light of its undesigned disclosures of character; and the inferences the reader draws are not always those of the writer.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. civ.

His account of his scepticism.

Renan has himself no doubt of the genuineness of his pristine faith, though he may be not quite sure of his scepticism. And he has a very definite theory of the process by which he passed from belief to unbelief.

"I am going to show," he says in his *Souvenirs*, "how the direct study of Christianity, undertaken in the most serious spirit, left me not enough faith to be an honest priest, and on the other hand, too much respect to play an odious comedy with beliefs so sacred." [1]

Ascribes it entirely to Biblical criticism.

As to the cause of his faith's shipwreck, he assures us that it was not personal, nor ecclesiastical, nor doctrinal, nor philosophical; but it was simply and solely the historical and critical exegesis of the Bible.

"My faith was destroyed by historical criticism, not by scholasticism, nor by philosophy." [2]

This assertion he reiterates over and over again. He is persistent, almost passionate, in his determination to convince us, that his unbelief was due, not to failure of faith in the supernatural, but entirely to his discovery of contradictory statements, impossible dates, spurious authorship, and general inaccuracy in the records of Revelation.

The theory is untenable.

But were the case against the Scriptures as bad as Renan thinks, even then the facts would not justify his action. The most negative form of Biblical exegesis will still yield a modified Theism,

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 197. [2] *Ibid.* p. 258; *cf.* pp. 296–8.

never an atheistical Pantheism. Renan found it impossible to show the reasonableness of his conduct to the ordinary intelligence in the person of his old mother.

> "Though very intelligent in her own way, my mother was not sufficiently learned to understand how a man could change his religious faith, because the Messianic interpretations of the Psalms will not hold water, and because Gesenius, in his commentary on Isaiah, has the best of it on almost every point against the orthodox." [1]

Reason of Renan's anxiety to father his unbelief on criticism.

Madame Renan's lack of comprehension will be shared by more erudite persons. The fact is, Renan's anxiety to make exegesis the scapegoat of his scepticism springs from his perception, that—to use his own words—the disproof of miracles must be historical, not metaphysical.[2] It is easy, he points out, to produce an *a priori* argument that bars out the supernatural, but our critic sees clearly that no *a priori* reasoning is relevant. On the other hand, historical evidence is pertinent, and could be decisive, but the difficulty is to produce it. Thus

The only legitimate dis-proof of miracle is the historical.

the logical sceptic is in a dilemma. On the one hand, there is the metaphysical method, which is adequate but not available; on the other, the historical process, which is legitimate but not conclusive. It is the sceptic's Gordian knot. It must be cut. Ashamed to acknowledge the metaphysical paternity of his scepticism, Renan adopts the desperate expedient of attempting to father his

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 322. [2] *Ibid.* p. 238.

doubt on criticism, which in truth was never anything more to it than foster-nurse. The artifice is palpable and pathetic.

Real genesis of his doubts

Turning to the *Souvenirs*, we discover that the genesis of his doubt was much more complex than he imagines, and the amount of transformation in his religious position much less than he fancies.

Influence of his birthplace.

Renan was born in 1825 at Tréguier, a small cathedral town of Brittany. He describes the place as

> "A town entirely ecclesiastical, innocent of commerce and manufacture, a vast monastery into which no noise of the outer world ever penetrated, where what other men pursue was counted vanity, and where that which laymen call chimera, passed for the sole reality. It was in this surrounding that I passed my childhood, and it made an indestructible fold in my character."[1]

Race

The population, made up of a few fishermen, seamen, and small tradesfolk, huddled together round the cathedral, is uniformly poor, and proud of its poverty. Money-making they consider base, if not positively bad. The good things of this life being, in their opinion, a fixed quantity, no individual can become wealthy save by taking more than his fair share. The idea is characterized by Renan as at once noble and nonsensical, and its persistence in himself and his compatriots he explains as a consequence of their Celtic idealism. A more important result of this quality is their religiousness. It has, how-

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 7.

ever, a peculiar type. In its main features it is that of the middle ages, untouched by the Reformation, and unruffled by modern doubt. It has a special fondness for the *culte* of certain local saints, who were in truth more of mythical giants than of pious recluses, and who are worshipped in the most primitive and pagan manner.

Early teachers.

The priests of the Seminary, who were Renan's schoolmasters, taught him well latin, mathematics, and morality. Modern literature, poetry, and art, they reckoned to be devices of the Devil. He describes them graphically as:

> "Venerable heads totally turned to wood and granite."[1]

Religious environment.

Living religion he seems nowhere to have met. The piety he did know was rather a superstition woven about a mythology, than a personal faith springing from a rational and devout theology.

Anti-clerical influences.

Nevertheless, the influences that fashioned his boyhood cannot have been so exclusively ecclesiastical as he would have us believe. Tréguier had among its inhabitants a survival of the Revolution in the shape of an old man, possessed of atheistical books and advanced opinions, who was nicknamed

"Father System."

"Father System," from his fondness for that learned phrase. There was also a Voltairian uncle a watch-maker by trade, who coveting the boy for an apprentice, and hating the idea of his be-

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 172.

coming a priest, never missed a chance of damping his zeal for study by whispering in his ear the suggestive words, "An ass laden with latin!" To our surprise we discover that most of his relatives were anti-clerical.[1] There was a grandmother, who remained faithful to the old regime, founded on God and the king— Relatives.

"Two bulwarks of society," Renan ironically remarks, "which it is not certain can be replaced."

But his father and his uncles were ardent democrats, and even his mother had a decided leaning to the Revolution. There was Gascon blood in her veins, and much of the Gascon temperament in her character. She was frank and gay, brimful of curiosity and interest in life, overflowing with fun and mother-wit, but destitute of education, and, so far as we can find, devoid of any deep spiritual influence on her children. She was a less refined example of Goethe's mother, and just the antipodes of the mother of Augustine. Mother.

"She used to tell the grotesque legends of the Breton saints," says her son, "with wit and finesse, gliding artfully between the real and the fictitious, in a fashion which implied that all that was true only in idea."[2]

He says it was an excellent school of historical criticism; and, we may add, of religious scepticism.

As for the boy himself, he seems to have been sickly in body, sentimental in character, sedentary Boyish character.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 141. [2] *Ibid*, p. 87; p. 21.

in habits, and preternaturally fond of study. It is hardly a breach of charity to say he was somewhat of a milksop. Ten times a day he used to demand, "Mamma, are you pleased with me?" The desire was dutiful, its constant expression morbidly self-conscious. The fear of a mouse was sufficient to banish sleep from his bedroom, and courage from his breast. Muscular exercise he abhorred.

Lack of manliness.

> "I liked girls," he informs us, "much better than boys. They could not stand me; my delicate air annoyed them. We never could play together; they nicknamed me *Mademoiselle*: and teased me in every conceivable way. On the contrary, I was always happy with the little girls of my own age; they considered me quiet and sympathetic." [1]

He had his boyish dreams of love, which came to nothing, and his dreams of ambition, which did not come to nothing.

Ambition.

> "During the services in church, I used to fall into veritable reveries; my eye wandered in the vaulted roof; I read there I know not what; I thought of the celebrity of the great men books tell of. One day my cousin asked me, 'What are you going to be?' 'Me,' I replied; 'I will make books.' 'Ah! you are going to be a printer and publisher.' 'Oh! no,' said I, 'I will *make* books, compose them.'" [2]

Studiousness.

For the rest, his inaptitude for muscular exercise joined to his assiduity in study secured him in his twelfth year all the first prizes in the Tréguier Seminary. He was promoted to be a student in the College of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet in Paris.

Removal to Paris.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 114. [2] *Ibid*, p. 146.

Influence of M. Dupanloup.

The head of the school was M. Dupanloup, a man of immense energy and rare eloquence, a passionate partisan of the Church, ignorant of scientific theology, representing a fashionable Christianity, boneless and emasculated, having for its first dogma the maxim, that without a good literary education a man cannot be saved.[1] The seminary was dominated by his influence and informed by his ardent spirit. An intense life was developed, almost to the point of super-excitation. Modern literature was the rage; rhetoric the ruling study. It was an education adapted to produce orators and poets, but destitute of a solid, scientific foundation. Renan sums up the results of his residence in St. Nicholas thus:—he received an intellectual awakening, that was permanent. He was introduced to modern literature, and in particular to the Romantic school.

Spirit of the seminary.

Effects on Renan's mental and spiritual development.

> "I learned to know the meaning of the words talent, éclat, reputation, and I was lost to the modest ideal of my old masters."[2]

On the other hand this superficial culture—

> "Lulled my reason to rest, at the same time that it destroyed the pristine freshness of my faith."[3]

Promotion to Issy.

From St. Nicholas du Chardonnet he passed to take his philosophical course of study at Issy, an adjunct of St. Sulpice. Here he was subjected to a totally diverse discipline. Talent was despised;

New discipline.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 252. [2] *Ibid.* p. 185. [3] *Ibid.* p. 195.

rhetoric abjured; modern literature ignored. Erudition was revered; logic reigned supreme; and in metaphysics and theology scholasticism held undivided sway. Yet if there was but one school of teaching, there were two types of piety among the teachers. On the one hand there was

M. Gosselin.

M. Gosselin, with his thin face and slim figure, fastidiously clean in person, strictly orthodox in creed, scrupulously polite, disliking all undue fervour, and abhorring the ancient saints because of—

"Their disregard of personal cleanliness, their deficient education, and striking lack of common sense." [1]

With him, in his dislike of excessive zeal, was

M. Manier.

M. Manier, who was wont to condemn German metaphysics, because they kept constantly changing and never settled anything, while he commended the Scotch philosophy, because—

"It was soothing to the soul, and led up to Christianity." [2]

The opposing faction cultivated a less serene piety. They carried earnestness to fanaticism, pushed devotion into ecstacy, and indulged in all the flights and fervours of mysticism. At their head

M. Pinault.

was M. Pinault, Professor of Natural Science, a man of concentrated power and passion, possessed of much learning and originality. He looked with an evil eye on Renan's extremely moderate piety,

[1] *Souvenirs*, pp. 230, 250. [2] *Ibid.* p. 246.

compared with his excessive devotion to study. One day, he came on him, sitting in the park, reading Clarke on the Existence of God, wrapped in a thick padded overcoat.

Renan rated for intellectual sybaritism.

"Oh! the dear little treasure," he cried. "Heavens! but he looks comfortable, muffled up so nicely. Oh! don't disturb him. There! that is how it will always be. He will study, study on for ever. Yes, when the care of poor souls comes to claim him, he will still be studying—cosily cuddled up in his mantle, he will say to those who come to fetch him, 'Oh! let me alone! let me alone!'"[1]

It is a satisfaction to know, that once at least the youthful intellectual sybarite was so faithfully dealt with. The attack disturbed his peace for a time, but he drugged his doubts with the example of his teachers.

"I imagined that in being polite like M. Gosselin, and moderate like M. Manier, I was a Christian."[2]

Results of study at Issy were metaphysical scepticism and scientific pantheism.

His studies at Issy led him to two decisive conclusions. He lost all faith in metaphysics as a means of reaching truth, which can be attained, if at all, only through the positive sciences. From these again he acquired the conviction, that the law of the universe is an eternal becoming, an endless transformation, in which there is no place for particular creation.[3] He was, therefore, already a Hegelian pantheist. Though he failed to realise the significance of the change, he was in truth, as M. Gottofrey informed him, no longer either a Catholic or a Christian.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 242. [2] *Ibid.* p. 257. [3] *Ibid*, p. 250.

Residence at St. Sulpice.

In St. Sulpice, where he went to study theology, the discovery finally dawned upon him. From M. le Hir, his Hebrew teacher, he learned the perplexing problems of Biblical criticism. The master was able—Renan says, and doubtless says truly—by reason of the inextinguishable flame of piety that burned in his heart, to face these difficulties with unshaken faith. It was different with the disciple. Hebrew and Old Testament exegesis completed, or rather ripened and revealed, what ambition and metaphysics already had accomplished. Chafing against the restraints of an ecclesiastical career, fascinated by the impetuous sweep and vast vistas of German speculation, and intoxicated by dreams of glory, he burned for freedom to attempt like flights of soaring thought, and to attain a niche in the temple of fame. The clerical habit became intolerable, now it covered a creed so incongruous. The Romish doctrine of a mechanical inspiration had crumbled away beneath his feet. With it had disappeared the fundamental dogma of the Church's infallibility. He still fancied that he was a Christian, but a Catholic he knew he was not. With a courage and honesty that are to his credit, and with a sagacity likewise, that has been much to his advantage, he quitted a calling whose obligations he could not meet, and whose rewards he could not honourably win.

Biblical criticism completes the overthrow of his faith.

He quits the Roman Catholic Church.

The change, says Renan, was mainly external. In that he is right, for a living faith he never possessed. He prides himself on the fact, that he has adhered to all that was good in his early training. Virtuous he continued to be, though he thinks it was by mechanical habit, rather than conscious choice.

Subsequent development.

Remains virtuous.

> "When faith vanished," he explains, "morality remained. . . . . Such is the force of habit. A vacuum has sometimes the same effect as fulness. *Est pro corde locus.* The fowl, that has had its brain extracted, continues none the less under suitable stimulus to scratch its nose."[1]

The irony is powerful, and profound the insight—into his own character. In theology, however, his development was rapid. Within a few months he had ceased to believe in a personal God and in immortality.[2] Negative criticism may shatter faith in inspiration and an infallible Church; but it is a long leap from that to atheistic Pantheism. The causes of Renan's scepticism lie deeper than criticism. They must be sought in the very roots of his mental, moral, and spiritual nature.

Renounces all faith in the supernatural.

PART IV.

Connexion of Renan's Character and Criticism.

The peculiar character of Renan's career has been determined by three main causes:—the

Causes of Renan's career.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 342. [2] *Ibid.* p. 337.

nature of his theological training; his own mental bias; and the idiosyncrasy of his moral make.

Defects of his theological training.

At St. Sulpice he was introduced to the destructive criticism of unbelieving rationalism. The reconstruction of rational belief he did not meet. The only apologetic he knew was a helpless thing of casuistry and compromise, tinkering at details, and trafficking in pious legerdemain. He knew nothing of that believing exegesis, which exhibits in the records of revelation an organic growth and living presence of the supernatural, corresponding to the progressive unfolding in historic action of the revealing Spirit of God. The theology taught him was a system of lifeless orthodoxy, that was in reality over-reasoned rationalism, based on a theory of mechanical inspiration, which was again underpinned by the figment of an infallible Church. It was an attempt to enable men to walk by sight, and not by faith; an effort to be wiser than God, and to make His truth safer than He had made it Himself. In Old Testament story we read how, once on a time, to steady the seemingly tottering ark of God, a man reached forth a faithless and, therefore, presumptuous hand, and God—God struck him dead. The doom still falls on faithlessly presumptuous creeds and churches. Speaking of the theology of St. Sulpice, Renan remarks,

An irrational apologetic.

An over-reasoned mechanical dogmatic.

A dead theology.

"It had but one fault; it was dead."[1]

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 268.

Thank God, there is sometimes life in the bones even of a dead prophet;—but not for such as Renan.

Predominant artistic bias in Renan.

Mentally, Renan's bias is strongly artistic. This makes at once the merit and the demerit of all he produces. In Oriental studies he has not contributed much that is solid in departments demanding profound and absolutely original research. He has never sufficiently mastered the linguistic tools,[1] nor does he possess the necessary technical tastes and aptitudes. But he is an indefatigable collector of facts, and an inimitable systematizer and expounder of the investigations of others, though, it must be added, his generalizations are often superficial. His account of the origins of Christianity deservedly takes a high place in the ranks of *belles lettres*, but it cannot be said to have much weight in the realm of serious history. His method is that of the novelist, not that of the historian. Divination is his master-tool.[2] Facts are of secondary consequence.

Seen in his linguistic studies.

Apparent in his History of Christianity.

> "It is the business of the historian to make out of incidents half-true an *ensemble* that is wholly true."[3]

False ideas of the methods and purposes of History

As if a sound building could be built of unsound timbers! But then the purpose of history is not to tell what happened, but to set forth the his-

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 288. [2] *Vie de Jésus*, p. c.
[3] *Ibid*, p. xx.

torian's ideas. Reciting his motives for publishing his memoirs, he says:

"One writes such things, in order to transmit to others the theory of the universe which he carries in himself."[1]

Accuracy of small moment.

In composition of this sort accuracy were impossible. Renan does not attempt it.

"I have set down many things to make the reader smile: had it been usual, I should more than once have written on the margin *Cum grano salis.*"[2]

Pictorial effect: the ruling aim.

In penning his larger histories, he tells us, that he has always insisted on having things fall into groups and pictures. It is an excellent principle for the artist, but not for the historian. Things do not fall always into groups and pictures, either in nature or in revelation. But, if facts will not voluntarily figure out M. Renan's ideas, so much the worse for the facts. In a letter of his student days, speaking of two German reformers, he says:

Fact of less value than the idea.

"I love them even if they be not pure. For what I love in them, as in all other men, that rouse my enthusiasm, is a certain type of beauty and morality which I make out of them. It is this ideal of mine that I love in them. Meantime, do they correspond to this type? That is a matter which concerns me very little."[3]

Scales of veracity.

Personally, Renan tells us, he is accustomed to discriminate shades of sincerity, and degrees of veracity. In conversation he does not say what he thinks, but what he fancies his hearer wishes him to say. In the first half of his life he

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. iii. [2] *Ibid.* p. iv. [3] *Ibid.* p. 385.

carried this habit to excess. His sister showed him forcibly its inexpediency. Since then he has confined himself to falsehoods of jest, official lies, polite prevarications, flourishes of phrase essential to a well-turned sentence, or requisite to avoid a worse evil, the stabbing of a brother author.[1] On the contrary, in his writings he has practised an absolute sincerity. Not only has he said nothing he does not think, but, what is rarer, he has said everything he thinks.[2] It may be so. But how has he thought it, and how has he said it? As the loyal interpreter of truth, or as the light-fingered word-painter for the public eye? Renan is intensely conscious of his audience. He is not engrossed in his subject. Its intrinsic interest is not enough; he needs an external stimulus. He plays to the footlights. Letters weary him. For a single eye he cannot bring himself to mental expression. How can one, he cries, give one's performance before a solitary spectator?[3] He has always written for the many, never for the individual.

Literary deviations from truthfulness.

Writes for his audience.

"I have not existed completely," he avows, "but for the public."[4]

That is it. He has written not as the scholar, not as the man of science, not as the cavalier of truth, but as the posturing actor playing on a Paris stage.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 363. [2] *Ibid.* p. 151.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 152. [4] *Ibid.* p. 365.

Renan is an artist, and sacrifices everything to form.

Renan is a literary Proteus. *Formas vertit in omnes.* But here we grasp him, and seize the secret of his being. With him form is everything fact nothing. Metaphysics, history, science, religion,—they are all alike raw material for pictures In him the theologian, the linguist, the philosopher are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water to the artist. It is at once the method, and the measure of his power. Readers go to him not for history, not for truth, but for style, for suggestive phrases, for mental stimulus, for enjoyment. It is all he desires. He had rather not be cramped by consistency, and pinned to principles. He

An intellectual opportunist.

prefers to be in his opinions an opportunist, and in speculation to enjoy an unfettered intellectual vagrancy. History he regards as a petty science, that can never be more than conjectural. It is the regret of his life to have chosen for his study a species of researches that can never become

Contemptuous estimate of history.

authoritative, and must always remain in the condition of interesting considerations about a reality for ever disappeared.[1] But he consoles himself with the reflection, that for this reason they are all the more prolific of pleasure and exercise to the imagination, and so all in all he has chosen

Philosophy only valuable as an intellectual exercise.

the better part. Not even metaphysics can secure graver treatment at the hands of this light-hearted sage. Philosophy is "the sacred music of think-

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 363.

ing souls," "the exquisite art of playing the lyre on the finest fibres of the spirit, of posing without solving problems of a transcendental order." In other words it is not a search for truth: it is an intellectual indulgence—a *jouissance*. Says M. Talmeyer:—

M. Talmeyer's estimate of him.

"What M. Renan pursues beyond everything else is intellectual enjoyment. He seeks truth after the fashion of an intellectual Don Juan. All ideas are in his eyes alike good; none can make him constant. What he demands of art, science, research, study, travel, meditations, recollections, is a succession of fascinating hypotheses, with which he may pass an hour of voluptuous and refined relaxation."[1]

The quality and value of the fruits of such labours were well expressed by M. Doudan, when he said:—

M. Doudan's estimate of his work.

"Renan donne aux hommes de sa generation ce qu'ils desirent en toutes choses—des bonbons qui sentent l'infini."

"Renan gives the men of his generation what they love in everything—sweetmeats scented with the infinite."[2]

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Truth is at the bottom of a well. Certainty cannot be reached. What should the wise man do but enjoy himself, and bear his disappointment with good-humoured irony?

The last word of philosophy according to Renan

"I repeat it," says our sage, with rueful resignation, "when one has given oneself so much time and trouble to find the truth, it costs much to confess that it is the frivolous fools, who are resolved never to read a line of St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas, who are in the right. Tom, Dick, and Harry, arriving at a bound and with so little trouble at the last word of philosophy! 'Tis hard to think of, very hard."[3]

[1] *Intransigéant* of 29th June, 1883. [2] *Mélanges.*
[3] *Souvenirs*, p. 155.

Renan's priestly pretensions.

On the moral side of his character, it is a pet persuasion of M. Renan, that he is both by birth and breeding a priest, with the peculiar vices and virtues of the order. A priest he may be after the worldliest order of the Romish priesthood, but a true priest to men of God's own making, he is not. To bring God and man together in living communion, that is the priestly function in this world's economy. To do that, a man must stand nearer to God than his fellows, and it is his task to lift them to his loftier level. By a love that makes their sins and sorrows his in real striving and suffering, he must embody them in his person, and be in actual fact their representative and leader Godward. It is a rôle, that requires the uttermost self-sacrifice, a sympathy wide as humanity, and a personal relation to God that nothing can shatter. Once only in the world's story has the rôle been filled perfectly and uniquely in the person of Jesus, mankind's great High Priest, who by the offering of Himself hath reconciled the world unto God. Partially filled it is by His followers, just in proportion as they reproduce their Master's life and character. By this standard let us measure Renan's priestly claims, and his pretensions to measure the Divine priesthood of Christ.

The essence of true priesthood.

By this standard let Renan be tried.

Has he ever known God?

Has Renan ever known the living God? The story of his childhood is suffused with the dreamy dimness of cathedral aisles, the silvery music of

minster bells, the carved agonies of altar crucifixes, the pallid faces of pictured martyrs, and the weird tales of legendary saints. But in that soft dawn of life's day, we catch no echoes of the Divine summons, which—as to the infant Samuel—so often comes, to irradiate life's morning with heaven's own light, and mark the young spirit for a high and holy calling. Through all his religious studies he went, scanning theories, examining evidence, testing doctrines, but God he never met face to face. His relation to the Infinite Father was all along speculative, never vital. His life was woven about a church. It had not grown around the living God. Therefore, when the rupture came, the wrench was to be torn from church and home. We see no rending of sensitive fibres of accustomed trust and love, no sundering of filial fellowship with a heavenly Father. To Renan now God is nothing but a Divine *souffle*—an impersonal atmosphere of the ideal world. Was God ever anything more? Renan seems to be one of those men, in whom that inner faculty of conscience, which perceives and asserts God, is absent or inactive. He has religious aspirations, never religious certainty. It is this that he seems to suggest in a paragraph, embodying a fancy of one of his friends.

No trace in childhood.

None in the story of his studies.

None in the destruction of his old creed.

Apparent absence of inner sense of God

"After my death," he writes, "round the ruined church of St. Michel, which frowns down on Tréguier, my soul shall

nightly fly in the form of a white sea-mew, beating the bolted door and barred windows, seeking to enter the sanctuary, but ignorant of the secret way, wailing incessantly. 'Tis the soul of a priest that wants to say his mass,' the passing peasant will murmur. 'He will never find a clerk to make the responses,' another will answer. Just so. It is precisely this that has always been lacking in my church—the response. My life is like a mass, on which a dark destiny hangs heavy; an eternal 'I will go up unto the altars of God,' but none to reply, 'Unto God, that maketh glad my youth.' In default of better, I try to make the responses myself. But it is not at all the same thing."[1]

How should he measure Christ?

Renan has never heard the Father. How should he measure Him who was ever in the Father's bosom?

Christ's sense of human brotherhood.

That He might be a priest to men, Jesus was made like His brethren. He companied with sinners; He loved the lost. Humanity was sacred in His eyes. Caste and class were nothing to Him, manhood everything. Common human brotherhood was the intensest of love-bonds. He lived not for Himself, but for others. And He laid down His life, that He might find it again an hundredfold in the lives of sinners saved by His death. In this fashion Renan was never a priest. Here is all the vocation he ever had:—

Renan's priestly vocation.

"Taught by my priest teachers to count every secular calling vulgar, base, degrading, good only for those who could not succeed in their studies, it was natural that I should wish to be what they were. The thought was hardly a choice, or an impulse, but just a matter of course."[2]

Thus with supreme self-seeking the calling of supreme unselfishness was chosen, not for com-

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 155. [2] *Ibid.* p. 140.

passion of men's sins and sorrows, but out of contempt for the common callings of the common lot. The mood has grown on this confident critic of Christianity. He has never been able to respect the commercial classes, and the wealthy he distrusts.[1] The poor he would like to pet and patronise at a distance, but he cannot bear mingling with them.[2] Humanity is excellent material for the artist to work up in books and pictures; but it is not stuff to be smelt or handled by refined persons in ministering service, though its wounds cry for help and its sores for healing. Talent and culture are what he worships. In common manhood he feels no real bond of brotherhood, and the sacredness of God-given humanity is hidden from his eyes.

The sense of the dignity of humanity

The sin and pain of life do not press on him. He has borne no sorrows and carried no sins—not even his own. Sin to him is not what it was to Jesus, a thing to die to rescue men from. In Renan's eyes it is but the shadow of moral light, a shading we should miss in the world's panorama, at most an anti-social force to be managed, mitigated, reformed, or utilised. Sorrow he has never felt to any extent, and he is glad of the escape.

No due sense of sin.

Hatred of sorrow.

"At the death-bed of my sister, nature literally chloroformed me, so that I escaped being the spectator of a scene, that might have inflicted a lasting bruise on my senses, and permanently disturbed the serenity of my mind."[3]

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 148. [2] *Ibid.* p. 358. [3] *Ibid.* p. 374.

In his youth he said prettily, that God is learned only by the heart, and the heart learns only by suffering.[1] Now he tells us that suffering abases, degrades, drives men to blasphemy.[2] It was not so with Jesus. It was not so with Stephen. It was not so with the confessors.

"But then," says Renan, "not many of the martyrs were very intelligent persons."[3]

Coldness in friendly service.

Common kindliness, even, is a blunder. Special affection is a vulgarity of narrow-minded persons. The cultured are capable only of a general, impersonal benevolence, that counts individual friendship a larceny perpetrated on the common stock.

"I confess," says Renan, "to a certain coldness in serving my friends . . . I have not encouraged friendship. . I have done little for my friends : and they have done little for me."[4]

It is a curious amendment of the gospel method. Jesus enjoined universal brotherhood, and secured it by saying, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Renan undertakes to conserve the rights of general benevolence by saying, "Love no one very much."

Gospel of selfism.

The way of wisdom is to keep yourself to yourself, and for yourself. Service of others is a delusion; self-sacrifice a mistake. The world is not worth dying for. The less you have to do with it the better. You will not save it, but it will soil you. Let it alone, and save yourself.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 383.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 376.
[3] *Apôtres*, p. 382.
[4] *Souvenirs*, p. 364.

PART V.

The Result; Personal and Critical.

Root of man's character and scepticism is intellectual egoism.

At last we have reached the root of Renan's character and of his scepticism. It is an intense, self-centred, intellectual egoism. He has shrunk with distaste from sharing the full-orbed round of real life, with its responsibilities and entanglements. He has, as far as he could, contracted himself, with all his faculties and susceptibilities, into the inner circle of a purely mental existence. He has severed himself from the world with its strain and struggle, its darkness and light, its sin and its sorrow, and sought to shrivel himself up into an uninterested spectator. He has wished to think only, not to live. He has a profound distrust of life. He has feared to risk his reason out in the rush and rub of actual existence. He has abandoned the quest of concrete truth, and set himself to find a fancied higher verity of idealism. He renounced the search for the real Christ, and substituted a Jesus of his own devising. He has thought to withdraw the questions of human life from the plane of actuality, and to solve them in a fictitious sphere of idealistic imagining. But the enigmas of existence are not problems of pure thought. The question of religion cannot be relegated to the realm of ideas. It is not an opinion.

He has severed himself from real life.

He has taken refuge in a faithless idealism.

A blunder.

It is a life. And it can be solved only by living Treat it as a theorem of mathematics you may, but you with your life are nevertheless a real factor in the real problem. Make that problem a problem of an ideal algebra, if you will, but you do it at the cost of reducing yourself to a mere symbol in the world's toil, and your life to a cypher in the balance-sheet of time.

The result is self impoverishment.

The infidelity that despairs of life is its own avenger. He who faithlessly withdraws from the strife of life's eager stage, and takes his seat as a spectator in the critic's stall, loses all sense of reality, and henceforth looks on at an unsubstantial show. For him, God and men and himself, sin and sorrow, endeavour and achievement, faith, hope, love, are but hollow phantoms, moving in an unreal phantasmagoria. He has torn himself loose from the common life, and leads a severed existence, an alien in the body corporate, a canker and a parasite, preying on the vital forces of his fellows. For surely he is a parasite, who, taking no share in the world's tale of spiritual toil and struggle, is content to derive an unearned subsistence of mere enjoyment from the toil and life of others. And the penalty of all parasitism is bodily, mental, moral degeneracy. To Renan, human existence has no earnest purpose, no eternal significance. Life is not a field for immortal action and achievement. With all its

The penalty of a parasitic existence.

Life loses its worth.

pathos and pity, with all its mystery, awe, and wonder, it is to him nothing but a *jouissance.* In his own character all warmth of spirit, all practical enthusiasm, all capacity of self-sacrifice for any noble endeavour, have cooled to a homogeneous and universal irony.[1] In this mood he contentedly surveys the past and awaits the future.

Enthusiasm shrivels into universal irony.

"Without knowing precisely whom I ought to thank, nevertheless I give thanks. I have had so much enjoyment in this life, that I have in truth no right to claim any compensation beyond the tomb. . . . The century in which I have lived will not probably be the greatest, but it will certainly be counted the most amusing of the centuries. Unless my last years reserve for me cruel sufferings, I shall not have, in bidding good-bye to life, but to thank the cause of all good for the charming promenade, which it has been permitted me to make across existence."[2]

In his youth he had some touch of warm enthusiasm, some gift of faith and hope and love; he had a soul, that went out to men and looked up to God. From the real strains of real life he fled, that he might preserve that soul of higher life, unhurt and unworn. Faithlessly and selfishly he sought to save it and—he has lost it.

The soul of noble living is lost.

In Renan's moral make there are, by his own admission, grave defects. There are defects still graver than those he allows. His renunciation of the Romish Church with its specious promises and presumptuous infallibility was a step dictated alike by reason and by honesty. But it was not reason, it was not honesty, that required his aban-

Renan's mistake due to moral defect.

[1] *Souvenirs*, p. 149. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 375, 378.

donment of faith in God, and in the life God made for men. That step was the consequence of a false philosophy and a perverted moral instinct. It was the blunder of the monk, who, to escape temptation, forsakes the world, only to find worse temptations in his self-selected solitude. From the trammels and temptations of life's responsibilities and realities Renan fled, that he might preserve his intellectual purity in the fancied freedom of a baseless idealism. And in all this, I am ready to allow, he was sincere enough, and selfish enough. Mentally he would be more unfettered than actuality allows; morally he would be safer than God meant men to be. To seek truth amid the engagements and entanglements of real life is a hazard, a temptation. The pressure of interest has often crushed the fibre of honesty into a pitiable pulp of insincerity. But perchance truth is only so to be found. Perchance temptation was intended, and cannot be evaded. You may shirk the common sort, but only to encounter a more deadly kind. God meant men to meet temptation and to overcome it. It was by the Spirit of God, that Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Temptation means pain and peril, and you love security and peace. Well, then, you may try to be wiser than God. You may slip away from real life, with its real temptations and its real struggles. You may create a solitude

Foolish cowardice.

Unconscious selfishness.

Truth to be found only amid the temptations and risks of real life.

around you, and call it peace. It is peace. But the peace is the peace of death

The quest of truth is a painful and perilous quest. That seems a hard saying. It is none the less a true one. God has many hard things to say in this life of ours, and He says them, for a painful truth is better than a pleasant lie. The path of Christian living is no easy path. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Not one whit less difficult is the way that leads to the light of God's face. The search for that light is a high calling, and a high calling means toil and temptation. It is a quest that in Old Testament story, carries in it a weird hazard of death. God dwells amid thick clouds and darkness. He, who would pierce that *cordon* of peril, must face fierce storms and fiery lightnings. In distant worship there is an ignoble safety; in nearer approach a nameless hazard and glory. It is an easy thing, comparatively, to lie down at Bethel, and sleep, and dream of an angel-ladder stretched from earth to heaven, and of a smiling Father in the sky, offering protection and promising prosperity. It is another thing at Peniel to wrestle hand to hand in the darkness with the God of this quite awful life of ours. In that struggle of life and death, it is not till after long nights of agony and tears and crippling

The quest of truth is perilous.

It must be so.

God is reached only through struggle.

wounds, that a new morning dawns, and a man says with bated breath but exultant eyes: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

In such conflicts true faith alone survives.

To this conflict from time to time God specially summons the Church. The terror and the hazard of it are that she must fight it out, stript of adventitious aid, bereft of all artificial defences. In the sharpness of the onset everything unreal snaps, and old accustomed props and bulwarks are swept away. Faith, that is founded on these alone, and has no hold direct of God, must fall. That faith alone survives, that grasps in love the hand of Christ, and hears the voice of the living God.

Changed it may be in form, but only by way of exaltation.

Changed it may be in outer form and feature, but the transformation is an exaltation. It was so with the faith of the first followers of our Lord. Their reading of the Scriptures was not quite that of their Master. To them Moses and the Prophets spake only of a conquering Christ and an earthly kingdom, while He saw in their presaging pictures the figure of a suffering Saviour and a crucified Redeemer. It was a very painful ordeal to unlearn their old interpretation, and to accept instead their Master's living commentary, that at once fulfilled the prophecies, and superseded them. But they loved Him, and they heard the Father. And so it came to pass, that one night on a lonely mountain-top, they saw their Master in a new strange light; and with Him, Moses, Israel's great law-giver, and

It was so with our Lord's disciples.

Elijah, Israel's mightiest prophet, talking to Him of the death He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. It was a transformation of their Old Testament exegesis and—a transfiguration. Dimly they divined its higher goodness, and they accepted it with gladness, yet still they were willing to lean too much on that old dispensation, that was passing away. Hardly knowing what he said, Peter cried, "Let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias;" as if the old could survive along with the new, as if the Law and the Prophets were equally to be revered with Christ. It was a fond wish, and a very natural thought, but it could not be. While he yet spake, a cloud overshadowed them, and the voice of God was heard, saying, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him!" When they looked up, Moses and Elijah had vanished out of sight. The old bulwarks of their faith had passed and gone. They were left alone with Christ, and, henceforth, saw no man save Jesus only.

The transfiguration of His person was a transfiguration of their faith.

THE UNITY OF THE CHARACTER

OF THE

CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS

BY THE

REV. C. A. ROW, M.A.

Argument of the Tract.

NOTHING is assumed but what is admitted by believers and unbelievers alike, viz., the existence of the Gospels, that they contain the portraiture of a great character which is the product of their conjoint contents, that the parts constitute a unity, and that the first three Gospels at least pourtray the same character from different points of view, and the conclusion is drawn that this unity is only consistent with their being the delineation of an historical reality. None of the negative theories propounded to account for the Gospels attempt to account for the origin of the portraiture. The two factors in the character, the Divine and human, are inseparably united, and are marked by the same moral tone. The blending of benevolence and holiness, the loftiest self-assertion and the deepest humility, and the exquisite shading into one another of the other portions of the character are such that it is inconceivable it could have been independently pourtrayed by a number of mythologists. The moral teaching of Jesus is so much above the age that it could not have been invented by the originators of the legends which are supposed to have formed the materials of the Gospel narratives. The moral teaching grows out of the miraculous narrative in such a manner that the two cannot be separated. The tone of the miraculous narratives and of the teaching growing out of them is as lofty as the tone of the didactic portion. The theory of tendencies is refuted. The identity of the Synoptic and the Johannine Christ is vindicated, and the conclusion is drawn that the only alternative which satisfies all the conditions of the case is that the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels is the delineation of an historical reality and not an ideal creation.

THE UNITY OF THE

CHARACTER OF THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS

A PROOF OF ITS HISTORICAL REALITY.

OUR Lord's person, work, and teaching, as they are depicted in the Gospels, constitute the essence of Christianity, and render it certain, if they are historical realities, that Christianity is a divine Revelation. Modern unbelief has not been slow to perceive this. Accordingly, although during the present century, the old plan of assailing Christianity through an unsparing criticism of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, has been pursued with the utmost vigour, its strongest efforts have been directed to capture what really constitutes the key and citadel of the Christian position, by attempting to prove that the Gospels, which constitute our only[1] source of information

What constitutes the essence of Christianity.

Unbelief directs its strongest efforts against this citadel.

[1] It is a most remarkable fact, that tradition has failed to hand down anything additional respecting our Lord's teaching and actions beyond what is recorded in the Gospels. The whole of the Patristic writings contain only about twelve additional incidents of this kind, and those of a very unimportant character,

What unbelief attempts to prove.

respecting our Lord's actions and teachings, are no true account of the life and teaching of the actual Jesus; but although they may contain a few grains of historical truth, that the bulk of their contents consists of a mass of myths, legends, and ideal creations, which the credulity and enthusiasm of His followers have thrown around the historical Jesus.

The extent of the controversy.

The controversy, thus engendered, extends over a wide range of subject matter, both in the attack and in the defence. The writer of the present Tract, however, proposes to concentrate the reader's attention on a single point of the evidence,

This Tract confines itself to the crucial question of the Gospel portraiture of Christ.

under the firm persuasion that by itself it is conclusive of the entire question, viz., that the unity of the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels proves that it is the delineation of an historical

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two or three of which savour strongly of the Apocryphal. These really add nothing to our knowledge of His teaching or His actions. Yet there can be no doubt, that traditionary reminiscences of both were current as late as the first half of the second century; and that they must have been rife at an earlier period. The fact of their existence is directly affirmed by Papias in the extract of his writings which has been preserved by Eusebius. He states that he himself preferred these reminiscences to written documents. But his testimony is hardly required, for the thing itself is inherently probable; and the authors of the Gospels themselves inform us, that our Lord did and uttered many things which they have not recorded. A recorded speech of St. Paul contains one saying; and the remainder of the New Testament, not one. Respecting those Gospels called Apocryphal, some observations will be made below

reality, and is utterly inconsistent with the theory that it is an ideal creation.

The foundation of the argument.

The following facts, which will form the foundation of the argument, must be admitted to be true by believers and unbelievers alike.

First: The Gospels exist.

Secondly: Whatever theory may be propounded respecting their origin, or the nature of their contents, they contain the portraiture of a great character, that of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thirdly: That this character is composed of a multitude of parts, *i.e.*, it is the product of their conjoint contents.

Fourthly: That the parts of which it is composed, constitute an harmonious unity.

Fifthly: That in three at least of the four Gospels, in St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, which are commonly called the Synoptics, and as we believe, and shall prove below, in the fourth also, we possess different portraitures of the same character, the only difference between them being that they have been taken by their respective authors from somewhat different points of view.

The admitted unity only consistent with historical truthfulness

My position is, that this unity is only consistent with the portraiture having been the delineation of an historical reality, and is utterly inconsistent with the theory which affirms that the Gospels consist of a mass of myths, legends, and ideal creations.

Now, as it is certain, whatever account may be propounded of the origin of the Gospels, that the portraiture exists in them, its origin must be accounted for. I ask, therefore, how did it get there?

The origin of the character.

One theory affords a rational account of its presence, viz., that it is the delineation of a character who actually existed, copied from the life. This fully satisfies all the conditions of the case; no other theory which unbelief has succeeded in propounding, affords an account of its origin which sound reason can accept.

What then is the course which modern unbelievers have pursued in dealing with this subject? While they affirm that the Gospels are unhistorical, they fully admit that they are bound to give a rational account of how they came into existence. Numerous theories, which vary in detail, have been propounded for this purpose. All that is essential in these may be reduced under the four following heads:

Unbelieving theories.

1. The Naturalistic theory, now utterly abandoned as hopelessly inadequate.

2. The Mythic theory.

3. The Legendary theory.

4. A theory, which for the sake of brevity may be designated the Evolution theory, or the theory of tendencies. This theory, however, involves a liberal use of myths, legends, and ideal inventions,

in the formation of the materials out of which our present Gospels were composed.

The reader should observe that, singular to say, these theories have been propounded not to account for the origin of the portraiture, but of the narratives, and especially of its superhuman elements. My contention is, that no theory which fails to give a rational account of the origin of the portraiture, can be accepted as affording a true account of the origin of the narratives, for the obvious reason that the portraiture is the conjoint effect of the narratives.

No attempt has been made by unbelief to account for the presence of the portraiture.

This is obvious; yet strange to say, it is a point which has been universally overlooked by those who impugn the historical character of the Gospels. Not a single writer on this side of the question, as far as I am aware, has deemed it necessary to show how it is possible, if the Gospels are such as they are affirmed to be, viz., a mass of myths, legends, and ideal creations, for the portraiture ever to have got there; nor have any of them attempted to meet the objection which its presence obviously suggests to the truth of their theories. Yet it is evident the theory which fails to account for the origin of the portraiture, can be no true account of the origin of the narratives.

I now ask the reader's attention to the following points connected with the portraiture, which render the theory that it is an ideal creation simply incredible.

Admission of unbelievers.

1. The Gospels not only contain the delineation of a character, but of one which even a large majority of eminent unbelievers allow to be the greatest which has either existed in fact, or which has been invented by fiction. It also possesses this remarkable characteristic, that it is capable of evoking the admiration alike of the most simple-minded and the most intellectual of men. It is in fact the most Catholic of characters, and one which speaks more powerfully than any other to the higher affections of man.

Characteristics of the portraiture.

Nothing artificial about it.

2. It is evidently not an artificial creation, such as we meet with in ordinary historians and poets. These are in the habit of giving elaborate delineations of the characters of their heroes which are the embodiment of the views of their characters, which the writers designed to impress on the minds of their readers. Their characters are not the combined result of the facts which they narrate, but are the artificial creations of the poets or historians. To take an example. The works of Lord Clarendon, or Macaulay, abound with delineations of this description; but they are pictures which are the creations of the historian. Precisely similar is it with the poets. Their characters are artificial elaborations out of their own consciousness, or aided by such historical materials as they possessed, the details of which are filled up and coloured by the imagination. The point to which I ask the

reader's attention is that all such delineations are evidently artificial.

But in the Evangelists, this artificial character is absolutely wanting. This is palpable to every reader. Nothing can be more artless than the structure of the Gospels. It is impossible to read them without rising from their perusal with the conviction that it was not the purpose of their authors to delineate a character, but to compose a narrative which should be a record of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ. The creation of the character is the indirect, I may say, the accidental result of this purpose. Still the character is conspicuous on their pages. Yet, as I have said, it is impossible to find, from one end of the Gospels to the other, anything which bears the smallest resemblance to an artificial delineation.

The artless structure of the Gospels.

The purpose of the writers.

Another remarkable fact deserves attention. While there can be no doubt that their authors were penetrated with the profoundest admiration for the person of their Master, yet never once do they dilate on His great qualities. They contain no bursts of admiration at His benevolence, the dignity of His demeanour, His humility, His patience, His perfect sinlessness, the perfection of His holiness, or His self-sacrifice. All that they do is to record His actions and discourses with scarcely a comment or remark. They have even scarcely a hard word to say of His opponents,

The writers confine themselves to narration.

although they must have regarded the chief agents in bringing about His execution as the worst of murderers. The strongest word of denunciation which they have is that of "traitor," which St. Luke, and "thief," which St. John, applies to Judas, the other two Evangelists being content with designating him as "the man who delivered Him up."

The contrast of the Gospels to the Epistles.

In this respect the Gospels form a striking contrast to the Epistles. Their authors are constantly bursting out in admiration at His greatness, His humility, His meekness, and His self-sacrificing love, and habitually propound the perfection of His character as a subject for the imitation of believers, and to which they should strain their utmost efforts to grow. They even occasionally present us with a brief delineation of Him as a patient sufferer. In a word, He is the object around which the affections of their writers, and the different members of the churches, centre.

The difference due to the purpose of the writers.

The absence of this from the Gospels, therefore, cannot have been due to insensibility in their authors, but to the fact that the purpose of composing a record of His life and teaching held exclusive possession of their thoughts. Yet, despite the absence of the smallest conscious attempt to delineate a character, they have done so more effectually than any of the poets, historians, or biographers of the past, or of the present.

3. What then forms the character, and of what

does it consist? Evidently it is made up of the combined effect of the various narratives which compose the Gospels; and it results from simply placing them in juxta-position in the order in which they stand in the Evangelists. It is also clear that the effect produced is not dependent on a skilful arrangement of the parts. I draw attention to this for the purpose of showing how completely inartificial is its production. How then has it originated? The design of the Evangelists in composing their Gospels, as is stated by two of them, was to edify believers, and to instruct them in the principles of Christianity. To effect this, they have given us four narratives of our Lord's teaching and actions, and in doing it they have produced a result which they evidently did not contemplate, viz., they have set before their readers that most perfect of all delineations, the Christ of the Gospels.

Wherein the character pourtrayed consists.

On what the effect depends.

Now the parts of which this portraiture consists are extremely numerous; and if the theory of those whose views I am controverting is correct, they consist of a mass of legends and ideal creations, spontaneously elaborated by various persons at different times, without the smallest intention of delineating a character. Yet it is beyond dispute that they adjust themselves into an harmonious whole, for as a matter of fact, the portraiture spontaneously arises before the mental vision of every reader.

The parts of the portraiture numerous.

Yet they form an harmonious whole.

Further, while the Jesus of the Evangelists is depicted in a wide range of action, in a great variety of circumstances, and often in the most trying situations, and while the discourses which are attributed to Him embrace an extensive range of subject, the unity of the character is preserved throughout.

The unity of character is preserved in the most varied circumstances.

4. Next observe, the portraiture is composed of two factors, a divine and a human element. The former consists of the miraculous narrative of the Gospels, and of those portions of the discourses in which our Lord directly affirms His own superhuman character, or makes declarations which are only consistent with the consciousness that He possessed it. These portions of the Gospels unbelievers are unanimous in affirming to be either mythical, legendary, or ideal additions to the actions and teaching of the real Jesus, which have been attributed to Him by the enthusiasm of His followers.

The portraiture composed of two factors.

This being so, I ask the reader's attention to a fact of the greatest importance in this controversy, which he can easily verify for himself. As far as the moral colouring is concerned, it is impossible to discern any difference between this superhuman element and the other portions of the narrative. In this respect the divine and the human Jesus are precisely alike. Both bear indubitable marks of having been stamped with the same die. Instead of there being in the Gospels two Jesus's, a divine

No difference of moral colouring between the human and superhuman elements.

and a human one, both factors insensibly shade into each other, and blend together into an harmonious unity. So intimate is the union in the pages of the Evangelists, that it is simply impossible to separate the superhuman from the human Jesus, without making the entire narrative a mass of confusion. It is evident, therefore, if the human elements are historical, and the superhuman unhistorical, that those who invented the latter must have been penetrated with the elevated moral tone which is characteristic of the former.

Impossible to separate the superhuman from the human Jesus.

The following shows the importance of this consideration. Mr. Mill, in his *Posthumous Essays*, expresses the opinion that it is inconceivable that the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels can be an ideal creation, on the ground that His character is one which is absolutely above the conceptions of His followers, of the primitive Christians, or even of the Apostle Paul, to have invented. But while he makes this admission, he affirms that it is quite possible that His followers may have invented any number of the miracles which have been attributed to Him. Although Mr. Mill does not say so, I consider that I am justified in inferring that he would include among these supernatural elements all our Lord's lofty affirmations respecting Himself; for if He was not conscious of an indwelling presence of the superhuman, those utterances would have been in the highest degree presump-

Mr. Mill's opinion.

Inference from Mr. Mill's position.

tuous, and utterly inconsistent with that moral elevation which Mr. Mill justly attributes to the Jesus of the Synoptics. On the other hand, he directly affirms that the contents of the fourth Gospel, which he designates a mass of poor stuff, might have been produced in almost any quantities by His followers.

The moral aspect both in the superhuman and the human elements in the Gospels is identical.

This being so, the reader will at once perceive the importance of the fact to which I now draw attention, that the moral aspect of the superhuman and the human elements in the Gospels is precisely similar. If it is impossible to believe that the latter can have been an invention of the followers of Jesus, because it stands at an elevation far above their conceptions, the same reason is equally applicable to the former. Further, if the latter are affirmed to be historical, and the former unhistorical, then it is evident that those who invented the former must have been interpenetrated with the elevated moral tone which is characteristic of the latter—a moral tone which Mr. Mill would certainly not attribute to a number of credulous mythologists. The whole question, therefore, resolves itself into one of simple fact. Is the moral elevation of the superhuman elements of the Gospels on a level with that of the human ones? We affirm that it is.

The proof to be found in the whole Gospels.

For the necessary proofs we refer the reader, not merely to a number of detached passages, but to

the entire Gospels. The New Testament is accessible to every reader, and he can test the truth of the above affirmation for himself by a careful perusal of their contents. If he will do so, I have no doubt that he will arrive at the conclusion that the moral aspects of the superhuman and the human Jesus are precisely the same, and that they so insensibly blend into each other in the Gospel narrative that it is impossible to separate the one from the other.[1]

The moral aspects of the superhuman and human Jesus blend insensibly into each other.

Such are some of the more striking facts on the surface of the Gospels, which are obvious to every reader. How, then, do those who impugn their historical character, account for the existence of these facts?

Stated briefly, their theory is as follows. The historical Jesus was a very great man, who suc-

Statement of the negative theory

[1] I would refer the reader to the following among many passages as examples of this blending: Matthew v., the whole chapter; I might add the entire Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus is depicted as acting the part of legislator of the kingdom of God, and as enunciator of its laws on His own sole authority, and even enlarging and annulling precepts which both He and His hearers accepted as precepts unquestionably divine. A similar assertion of authority pervades the whole of His moral teaching: Matthew x. 32–42; Matthew xi. 25–30; Matthew xix. 27–29; including the context from v. 25; Matthew xxv. 31–46; Matthew xxvi. 64, including the entire narrative of the passion and betrayal, John xi., John xiii. To these should be added every one of the miraculous narratives, including their entire context, in which our Lord is depicted as performing His miracles without any reference to a higher power or authority than His own, and those in which by His sole authority He undertakes to forgive sins.

The statement of the negative theory.

ceeded in attaching to himself a number of enthusiastic and credulous followers. These imagined him to be the Messiah of certain old predictions, and believing that the Messiah must do such and such things, they fondly imagined that Jesus actually performed them. This tendency greatly increased during the century which followed his death. Numerous ideologists invented a number of stories which ascribed to Him a superhuman character and the possession of miraculous powers, and the credulity of the primitive believers led them to mistake these stories for the facts of His historic life. The result was that the historic Jesus became gradually metamorphosed into a mythic hero, and the real events of His life became buried under a mass of myth, legend, and ideology. In this state of things, the authors of our three first Gospels took these legendary reminiscences in hand, and with the aid of a certain number of documents which were already in existence, composed their respective Gospels, which speedily acquired such a degree of popularity among the primitive believers that they have caused all the other legendary accounts to sink into oblivion, except those which happen to have been preserved in those eighteen compositions which are commonly designated the Spurious Gospels. The fourth Gospel, on the other hand, is affirmed to be a deliberate forgery, the work of some Christian,

The negative theory of the fourth Gospel.

bent on glorifying his Master, who was deeply imbued with the principles of the Alexandrine philosophy. These theories, it is true, have been propounded with considerable variations, but what I have here stated will be sufficient to put the reader in possession of their general substance. Such is the account which modern unbelief propounds of the origin of the portraiture. The following are some of the impossibilities involved in it.

Impossibilities involved in the theory.

According to the theories which I am controverting, the inventors of the legendary matter out of which our present Gospels were composed, must have been a numerous body. This is not only conceded by those against whose views I am contending, but it necessarily results from the fact that it was a gradual growth. It is also certain from the nature of the case that mutual consultation was impossible, inasmuch as the mythologists were the members of churches widely separated from each other.

The inventors a numerous body.

Mutual consultation impossible.

What then are we asked to accept as the true account of the origin of the portraiture in place of the natural one, that it is the delineation of an historical reality? We are invited to believe that a body of ideologists spontaneously engaged in the work of inventing a number of imaginary stories, and attributing them to Jesus; that the three first Evangelists made a selection out of a large mass

Imaginary stories must have been invented.

Selections must have been made from which the independent portraitures, constituting singly and in combination a unity, must have emerged.

of such stories, and by simply weaving them into a narrative, their respective Christs have emerged, each a unity in itself, and all three constituting a common unity. This is the theory which we are asked to accept of the origin of the different narratives which compose the Gospels, and consequently of the portraiture, for it is the conjoint effect of the narratives.

Why the creation has not been ascribed to a single ideologist.

The reader will perhaps wonder that the creation of the entire character has not been ascribed to a single ideologist; but this is so opposed to all the historical conditions of the case, that such a theory has not been propounded by a single unbeliever of eminence. Let it be observed that the only model which the inventors of the portraiture could have had to assist them was, that of the Messiah as delineated in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, a certain number of apocryphal writings, of which the book of Enoch was the chief, and the popular Messianic conceptions of the day. But the assistance which these writings could have afforded them must have been indefinitely small, because among other differences of character, the Messiah of the Old Testament is usually depicted under the image of a triumphant warrior who tramples his foes beneath his feet, whereas the Jesus of the Gospels is the Christ of peace, and One who denies to His followers the use of carnal weapons to promote His cause. The Messiah of the book

The only model available for the inventors.

Old Testament representations of the Messiah.

of Enoch is a superhuman being, without one single human trait; and the leading idea of the Messiah of popular expectation was that of a hero who would break the Roman yoke from off the neck of the Jewish people, and exalt them to universal rule. To all such ideas the Christ of the Gospels forms a striking contrast. It is certain, therefore, that the ideologists, if they had used any of the above materials as their model, would have depicted a Christ widely different from the delineation which is set before us in the pages of the Evangelists.

The Messiah of the Book of Enoch and of popular expectation.

The Christ of the Gospels a striking contrast.

Now, according to the theories of those whose views I am controverting, the Gospels are a natural growth out of the moral and religious ideas and the Messianic conceptions of the times. These were beyond all question earthly and carnal. The mythologists therefore must have made a start of some kind in advance of the moral and spiritual atmosphere in the midst of which they lived; for the Christ of the Gospels is beyond all question a spiritual Christ, and His moral teaching is a morality of the greatest elevation. It follows, therefore, as mutual consultation among the fabricators of the myths and legends which compose our Gospels was out of the question, that they must have spontaneously arrived at the same conclusion as to the style of character with which the Christ ought to be invested. The reader will,

The Gospels, according to negative criticism, an outgrowth of the ideas of the time.

The ideas of the time earthly and carnal. The Christ of the Gospels a spiritual Christ.

The unity of the character unaccountable on these lines.

I think, be of opinion, that such a supposition is incredible.

Another alternative.

But another alternative may be suggested. The authors of our present Gospels, out of the large mass of materials at their command, may have selected only such as were of a certain type, and by rejecting the remainder have consigned them to oblivion. This supposition, however, is only a little less incredible than the previous one; for it is essential to the theory in question, to assume that the primitive believers (the mythologists included), were to the last degree credulous and superstitious. Now, such people when they invent myths and legends, as all past history testifies, invariably invent such as are of a low type. Whence then did the authors of our Gospels get their supply of stories of a high moral elevation; or even if such were available, how has it come to pass that they have uniformly rejected every thing which was mean and contemptible, and incorporated into their narratives only what was elevated and moral? To this question it is impossible to give a satisfactory answer.

Nearly as incredible as the theory already controverted.

Impossible to account on negative principles for supply of highly moral stories used by the Evangelists.

But further, our present Gospels have superseded this mass of current legendary matter. How was this to be effected? The taste of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts is for the grotesque; and the theory in question affirms the primitive be-

believers to have been credulous and superstitious enthusiasts. How then were they to be induced to accept a set of stories of an elevated type as the only true account of the life and actions of the Founder of the Church, in the place of the current ones so congenial to their taste? Yet as a matter of fact they were thus accepted, and have consigned the others (with the exception of the contents of the spurious Gospels) to a well-merited oblivion.

The apocryphal Gospels.

Happily, however, we are not left in doubt as to the kind of fictions which credulous mythologists invent. In these spurious Gospels we possess a number of such fictions, of which the person of our Lord forms the centre. To two of these are assigned as early a date as the end of the first half of the second century; the remainder are of a later date. They enable us to know for certain what was the class of actions which during these times writers of fiction were in the habit of ascribing to our Lord. The incidents which they record are confined to two periods of His life, viz., His childhood and early boyhood, on which our Gospels are all but silent, and His passion and resurrection; and they omit the history of His ministry and teaching. The miracles which they attribute to Him are for the most part of a most grotesque character, and are devoid of all moral impress. They are almost too painful for quotation, being

The kind of miracles they record.

little better than caricatures of the Holy One of God. I have elsewhere drawn a brief contrast between the Jesus of these Gospels, and the Jesus of the Evangelists; and I cannot give the reader a better idea of their contents than by quoting it:

The Jesus of the canonical, and the Jesus of the apocryphal Gospels.

"The case stands thus: Our Gospels present us with the picture of a glorious Christ; the mythic Gospels with that of a contemptible one. Our Gospels have invested Him with the highest conceivable form of human greatness; the mythic ones have not ascribed to Him a single action which is elevated. In our Gospels He exhibits a superhuman wisdom; in the mythic ones a nearly equal superhuman absurdity. In our Gospels He is arrayed in all the beauty of holiness; in the mythic ones this aspect is entirely wanting. In our Gospels not one stain of sinfulness defiles His character; in the mythic ones, the boy Jesus is both pettish and malicious. Our Gospels exhibit to us a sublime morality; not a single ray of it shines in those of the mythologists. The miracles of the one and the other are contrasted in every point. A similar opposition of character runs through the whole current of their thought, feeling, morality, and religion."—*The Jesus of the Evangelists,* p. 381.

Such is mythology when it undertakes to deal with the person of our Lord. The supposition that the great character of the Gospels is the creation of a number of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts is therefore simply incredible.

Admissions of unbelievers touching the character of Christ.

The character of the Christ of the Gospels is admitted even by unbelievers to be one of the greatest elevation. Consequently, if it is an ideal creation, it is entitled to rank among the most perfect works of art; in fact, it is a work of art, just as great poems, paintings, and statues are works of art. Now these latter are never produced

at hap-hazard, but are the creations of persons endowed with lofty genius. If, therefore, the Christ of the Gospels has resulted from the labours of a number of mythologists (which is the theory of my opponents), it follows that those who assisted at its creation must have been persons of lofty genius and moral elevation.

The application of this theory to some acknowledged work of art, be it poem, painting, or statue, will render its absurdity manifest. Let us suppose that a character which runs through the entire action of a poem, forms a consistent unity; that both poem and character are admitted to belong to a very high order of such compositions, and are the result of the labours of a considerable number of poets, who spontaneously delineated the different parts of which it is composed. But as the whole is made up of the parts, it is necessary to assume that a number of persons of high poetic genius must have spontaneously concurred in its production. In a similar manner, if we were asked to believe that a celebrated painting or statue originated in a similar way, it would be necessary to assume the co-existence of a numerous body of eminent artists, who either by consent or chance, devoted themselves to the elaboration of the various parts, which when put together compose the picture or the statue; and that these different fragments, when put together, formed not

The application of the theory in question to an acknowledged work of art.

Its absurdity demonstrated.

only a unity but a painting or a statue, of the highest artistic merit.

The theory applied to the celebrated painting—The Marriage of Cana in Galilee."

A single illustration will enable the reader to appreciate the absurdity of such a position. There is in the picture gallery of the Louvre, a celebrated painting called "The Marriage of Cana in Galilee." It consists of a very considerable number of figures in a common grouping, all of which shade into each other, and form an harmonious unity of conception. Let us apply to this painting the theory which we are invited to accept as affording a rational account of the origin of the Gospels, and consequently of the portraiture which they contain. If then the picture is not the work of a single artist, but of a multitude of artists, each of them, in accordance with the above theory, must have spontaneously painted a number of figures, from which, when a selection had been made, and the selected figures were skilfully placed side by side, this celebrated picture was formed. This is simply incredible. Yet it is an undeniable fact, that the theory which we are invited to accept, as affording a rational account of the origin of the Gospels, and consequently of the portraiture of their Christ, is encumbered with far greater difficulties, for its fabricators, instead of being men of lofty genius and moral elevation, are, owing to the necessities of the above theory, affirmed to have been a body of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts.

The difficulties of the theory insuperable.

The theory necessitates the supposition that the primitive believers were credulous and superstitious.

The reader will probably wish to be informed, why those who have propounded the different theories which I am combating, encumber themselves with the assumption that the primitive believers were a body of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts. The reason is that it is necessary to do so, to enable them to account for the ready acceptance of the various miracles, which were attributed to Jesus, as actual facts of His real life, while in truth He Himself performed none.

No trace of fanaticism to be found in the Gospels, scarcely one of enthusiasm.

But not only does the legendary spirit involve a low moral ideal (for this is an invariable accompaniment of extreme credulity and superstition), but according to theories widely current among unbelievers, these particular legends must have been the creations of men who were at once narrow-minded, credulous, and, I may say, fanatically enthusiastic. Yet they are destitute of a single trait of fanaticism, and contain, as I have observed, scarcely any indication of enthusiasm. Still more, according to the theories of modern unbelief, the communities in the midst of which the legends originated were animated by a strong party spirit, which split them up into a number of contending sects. What effect would this have produced on the legends evolved in such societies? They would certainly be deeply tinged with their moral impress, and they would bear the indubitable marks of narrow-mindedness,

The effect of party spirit on the evolution of legends.

bigotry, and fanaticism. Each sect also would have elaborated a set of legends in conformity with its own tastes; and as the Judaising party was the predominant one among the primitive followers of Jesus, they would certainly have invented legends which were the counterparts of their own narrow-mindedness and intolerance. But as a matter of fact, no such spirit is impressed on the narrative of a single action which is attributed to our Lord. Great, therefore, must have been the unanimity of the inventors, and their moral ideal pre-eminently lofty! I now ask the reader's attention to a few facts in illustration of the difficulties which the ideologists must have overcome before they could have succeeded in delineating the various parts of which this great character is composed.

No trace of party spirit in the Gospel narratives.

1. They must spontaneously have concurred in delineating a character which beyond all question exhibits a combination of the divine and the human in a single personality. The character portrayed in the Gospels is obviously not the delineation of one which is divine throughout, nor of one which is purely human; but it is composed of a union of the superhuman and the human. The problem would have been comparatively easy of solution, if a single mythologist had proposed to himself to delineate a character which should exhibit either of these separate from the

The Divine and human elements in the Christ of the Gospels.

other; but when they are to be delineated in combination the problem becomes extremely complicated as to the proportion in which the superhuman and the human are to enter into the character, and how they are to be made insensibly to shade into each other, and form an harmonious unity. But immeasurably greater would have been the difficulty, if a number of mythologists had spontaneously engaged in elaborating portions of a character of this description, which, when combined, or even a selection of them, should form a unity. Yet it is a simple fact that the Christ of the Gospels does exhibit this unity, and that the two factors shade into each other with exquisite perfection.

They are blended together in a way that no ideologists could have conceived.

2. They must also have concurred in delineating a character which is the most perfect manifestation of benevolence, tempered with the perfection of holiness, and they have at the same time invested it with an aspect of stern severity, when brought into contact with certain forms of moral evil. I draw attention to this point, because the whole range of literature which bears on this subject proves that the diversity of opinion, how these three attributes are to be exhibited in combination in the same character, is very wide; not a few contending that the perfection of benevolence requires the exclusion of the sterner aspects of holiness. Yet these aspects of character, as

The union of benevolence and holiness in the character.

they are depicted by the Evangelists, unite together in the portraiture of our Lord with an exquisite harmony; nor do the Gospels contain an indication of the existence of a single legend which portrayed Him otherwise. In this respect its unity is complete.

The unselfishness of the Christ of the Gospels.

3. Numerous as must have been the mythologists, they all have concurred in attributing to Jesus absolute unselfishness. If we read the Gospels from one end to the other, we shall not detect in Him one single selfish trait. It follows, therefore, that none of the numerous legends out of which the character has been composed, could have depicted Him as stirred to anger by a sense of personal injury, or animated by a single motive of self-interest. Still, anger is not infrequently ascribed to Him; but it is invariably aroused by the extreme form of moral obliquity. Further, nowhere is this unselfishness more strongly exhibited than in the miraculous narratives, which, according to the theory I am combating, must have been all legendary inventions.

Self-consciousness of the highest greatness combined with the most perfect humility.

4. Equally unanimous must they have been in attributing to our Lord a self-consciousness of the highest greatness in combination with the most perfect humility. I say self-conscious greatness, because the self-assertion which is attributed to the Christ of the Gospels is of the strongest possible character. It is such as would be simply extravagant in the

mouth of any other man, in fact it would have been profane; and its extravagance is greatly increased by the humble position of the utterer. Now, nothing would have more taxed the skill of a poet or a novelist than to make the parts of such a character harmonise with one another in an ideal delineation. Probably no more difficult problem could be presented to either; yet both fit into one another in the Jesus of the Evangelists with an exquisite harmony, and are pre-eminently conspicuous in His miraculous actions. But His self-assertion, great as it is, is never obtrusive; and while our Lord is uniformly depicted as conscious of supreme worthiness, He is invariably clothed in a garment of humility. These are traits, the fine touches of which defy all power of imitation, yet they underlie the entire structure of the Gospels. A single ideologist would have found the delineation of this portion of the character a work of the greatest difficulty; yet according to the theory I am controverting, not only must the numerous mythologists of primitive Christianity have been unanimous in attributing these exquisite traits of character to Jesus, but they have succeeded in delineating them to perfection.

Unobtrusiveness of Christ's self-assertion.

5. Equally unanimous must they have been in attributing the ideal of moral perfection to the character which they invented; and still more remarkable is it that they must have agreed in what

The Christ of the Gospels the ideal of moral perfection.

the ideal of moral perfection consisted. We know as a matter of fact, that there has been a wide diversity of opinion as to the mode and degree in which the various virtues ought to be combined, so as to form a perfect character. Yet the delineators of the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists must in some way or other have arrived at an unconscious unanimity, for no trait of discord can be found in it throughout. Further, it is the universal tendency of mankind, and pre-eminently of the ancient world, to ascribe the highest place to the heroic and political virtues, and a lower one to the milder and more unobtrusive ones. But in the Christ of the Gospels, while the heroic ones are not wanting, they are subordinate to the milder aspects of His character. Here again the numerous mythologists must have unanimously arrived at a conclusion, the very opposite of which the almost unanimous opinion of the times would have urged them to adopt.

The tendency to give the highest place to the heroic and political virtues.

6. The suffering Christ is a marvellous delineation, and so important is the place which it occupies, that in point of space the history of the passion fills about three-seventeenths of the entire Gospels. But, as we have seen, the mythologists unanimously agreed in attributing to their ideal Christ a superhuman character. The problem which must have presented itself to their minds must therefore have been an extremely complicated

The suffering Christ.

one, how such a character was to be depicted as a sufferer. Here the whole course of ancient literature, even if they had been acquainted with it, would have furnished them with no model; for if they had used as such the few instances of this kind in the ancient poets, they would have conducted them wide of the Christ of the Gospels. Witness the Prometheus of Æschylus. Nor with the exception of two, viz., the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third of Isaiah, would the Messianic delineations of the Old Testament have guided them nearer to it; and these two could only have furnished them with the barest outline, not easy to reconcile with the other Messianic delineations. Further, in attempting to depict the Messiah as a patient sufferer, the whole current of popular thought was against them. Yet their portraiture of the suffering Christ is consistent throughout. No discordant trait mars its harmony. He is all submission to His Father's will, He is calm, He is dignified in the presence of His persecutors, He is absolutely patient under the acutest sufferings. What can surpass the dignity or the self-possession of the scene before Pilate, or the patience of the Sufferer on the cross? But, further: the extremity of suffering concentrates the thoughts exclusively on self. Not so is it in the case of the Jesus of the Gospels. Yet it is human to be perturbed at suffering, even at the prospect of it, and

Ancient literature furnished no model.

Only the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah of the Messianic delineations of the Old Testament could help, while popular thought was against the conception.

the Sufferer of the Gospels is not only conceived of as superhuman, but as human also—how, then, were these factors to be brought into harmony? The answer of the Synoptic Gospels is the scene at Gethsemane. Who shall describe it after them? The entire account of the Passion is a unity throughout. If, therefore, a mythic element enters into it, the mythologists must have been unanimous as to the mode of its delineation. Its execution is so perfect that a writer not too favourably disposed to Christianity has put into the mouth of a fictitious character what are believed to have been his own sentiments, that if the death of Socrates was worthy of a philosopher, the Passion of Jesus, as it is delineated in the Gospels, is worthy of a God.

The account of the Passion is a unity.

7. Renan has expressed the opinion that no character, whether real or ideal, approaches that of Jesus in the closeness of His consciousness of God, and in His intimate perception of His moral fatherhood. If I understand him rightly, he considers this to be a real trait in the character of the historical Jesus, though it is very difficult to understand how it is consistent with his theories respecting the large amount of legendary matter which is incorporated in the Gospel narratives. But at any rate, the presence of so large an amount of historic truth in their pages, which Renan's position presupposes, is inconsistent with the theories which are currently accepted by modern unbelievers. He

Renan on the intimacy of Christ's consciousness of God.

His position inconsistent with current unbelieving theories.

has, however, only stated a fact which must be patent to every reader of the Gospels, viz., that the Christ is uniformly depicted as possessing a most intimate consciousness of God and of His Fatherhood in relation to Himself; and as teaching the great truth of His fatherhood of mankind. The fact thus noted by Renan may be more accurately stated as follows. Their Christ is depicted as uniformly conscious of the indwelling of the divine. Instances of this may be found in nearly every page, but especially when He acts the part of a moral teacher, enunciating, as He does, the laws of the kingdom of heaven on His own sole authority; when He works His miracles; and in the closeness of His communion with God. If, then, the portraiture is an ideal one, the mythologists must have spontaneously arrived at an agreement as to how, in these aspects of it, it was to be delineated; for the character in these respects is unique, and they were absolutely without a model to aid them in the delineation; yet they have succeeded in successfully embodying the idea over an extensive area of dramatised action. The reader must form his own opinion whether the above theory affords a rational account of the unity of the conception, which, in the points above referred to, indubitably pervades the entire narrative of the Gospels, and the portraiture of their Christ.

The Christ of the Gospels uniformly depicted as conscious of the indwelling of the divine.

The character unique.

Inexplicable on the theory of the spontaneous agreement of many mythologists.

8. The Gospels are set in an historic framework,

The historic framework of the Gospels.

i.e., they contain very numerous allusions to the history, manners, customs, modes of thought, and circumstances of the times during which the events which they profess to record occurred. It is true that the correctness of some few of these have been called in question by hostile critics; yet it is beyond question that the bulk of them (and they are very numerous), have been verified. The reader can readily form an estimate of the difficulty with which the attempt to set ideal creations in an historical framework is attended, by simply bringing under review the works of fiction with which he is acquainted. He will find that poets and novel writers, even of the highest eminence, when they dramatise their characters over an extensive sphere of action, very imperfectly succeed in adjusting them to the actual facts of history. This is even the case with Shakespeare, of which any one may satisfy himself by reading those of his historical plays of which certain events in Roman history form the groundwork. The characters and the sentiments attributed to them are really modern ones, ticketed with Roman names. Thus, to adduce one or two instances, the poet has confounded between the two Brutuses, Decimus and Marcus, supposing that the latter was Cæsar's favourite, whereas it was the former. He makes Marcus proclaim himself to be free from the vice of paltry pelf, with the gains of which he avers that he will

The bulk of the historical allusions have been verified.

The difficulty of setting ideal characters in an historical framework.

Shakespeare's mistakes.

never defile his hands; yet we know from Cicero's letters, that this paragon of Roman virtue was an extortioner, and was ready to enforce payment of his debts by means so unhallowed that the great orator, although his friend, refused to allow of his doing so during his administration of Cyprus and Cilicia, though a former governor had actually conceded to his agent the use of a troop of horse, who closely besieged the senate of Salamis, until some of its members died of starvation. The debt was on a loan, on which the interest was at the rate of 48 per cent. per annum. He is also made to address the mob in the Forum, who called themselves the Roman people, as "Friends, Romans, Countrymen!" No Roman orator would ever have used these or similar expressions. So again, he is made to address senators as "My Lords," a term which the Emperor Tiberius said, when it was attempted to be addressed to himself, was only fit to be used by slaves to their masters. In speeches in the senate the uniform mode of address was "Conscript Fathers," "Patres Conscripti." It would be easy to adduce a number of similar instances from the writings of the poet, but these will be sufficient to give the reader an idea of the thing intended. If, then, the greatest of dramatists has conspicuously failed in accurately portraying the historical persons whom he professes to delineate, their habits and modes of thought, and making

Shakespeare's mistakes continued.

The difficulties of the supposed inventors of the Gospel history much greater.

them fit in with the historical facts of the times, I need hardly say that the difficulties must have been great indeed which must have encumbered the credulous mythologists who invented the mythical and legendary stories of which our Gospels are alleged to be chiefly composed, to adjust their inventions to the facts of history and to the geography of the places in which the scenes are alleged to have occurred. Yet the allusions made in these to current ideas and events are far more numerous than those in the plays in question, and most of them are of the most incidental character; yet every discovery in history proves their correctness, even in those cases which in former times have been made subjects of dispute. The simple truth is, that the more history has been explored, the more their historical accuracy has been vindicated. The common sense of the reader will, therefore, lead him to conclude that the difficulties would not only have been great, but insuperable.

The historical allusions in the Gospels have been verified by every discovery in history.

9. No small portion of the Gospels is occupied with giving an account of our Lord's moral teaching, in which I include His parabolic utterances. Unbelievers of the type of the late J. S. Mill are ready to accept the moral teaching of the Synoptic Gospels as the actual moral teaching of the historic Jesus, while they deny everything in Him which savours of the supernatural. This position, however, even if it could be admitted to be the true

Our Lord's moral teaching.

solution of the facts, leaves the real point at issue entirely untouched. As I have above observed, the ground taken by this eminent writer is, that the moral teaching, which these Gospels attribute to Jesus, is so elevated above the conceptions of His followers, that it was absolutely above their powers to have invented it. This position I cordially accept. It is founded on the general principle that a man cannot, by any effort of his own, raise himself more than a few degrees above that moral and spiritual atmosphere in which he is born and educated. But this being so, the following question urgently demands an answer. If Jesus was a mere man like ourselves, how became He capable of attaining an elevation high above the surroundings of His birth and education? The reader will perceive that the position taken by Mr. Mill and others does not meet the difficulty, but only removes it one step higher up. Those who propound this theory as an adequate solution of the facts, may be justly called upon to answer the question which was asked over eighteen hundred years ago, and which remains unanswered to the present day, except on the assumption of the indwelling in Him of the superhuman. Whence got this man all this wisdom?

J. S. Mill's position.

It only removes the difficulty a step higher up.

But I am persuaded that a careful perusal of the Gospels will convince the reader that it is impossible to effect this separation between the

The superhuman and the human in Christ's teaching cannot be separated.

moral teaching of our Lord and the supernatural elements which they contain. I would ask him to observe, in the first place, that considerable portions of the moral teaching directly grow out of the miraculous narrative, and cannot be separated from it without doing violence to the whole. Yet this portion of it is equally elevated with those parts of it which are not so united. But secondly, and chiefly, the far larger proportion of it is permeated by utterances in which our Lord makes claims of so exalted a nature as to be only consistent with the assumption that He was conscious in Himself of the presence of the divine. To the general character of these I have already alluded. All that I here wish to observe is, that these utterances as much involve the presence of a superhuman element as those actions which are commonly called "miracles." Yet the whole of this elevated moral teaching of Jesus is interpenetrated with this idea. Throughout the Gospels His utterances are placed by Himself on a level with acknowledged oracles from heaven. Yet if all the superhuman elements of the Gospels are ideal, all the utterances which contain these lofty claims, as well as those which grow out of the miraculous narratives, must have been the inventions of the mythologists. From this it follows, that these credulous and superstitious followers of Jesus must have been men of a moral ideal, ele-

Much of the moral teaching of Christ grows out of the miraculous narrative.

More of it implies His consciousness of the divine indwelling.

Christ's utterances placed on a level with acknowledged utterances from heaven.

vated high above the conceptions of their times, otherwise they could not have invented them. But this is not only contrary to the principle on which Mr. Mill's reasoning is based, but is in itself incredible.

It is incredible that they could have been invented by men of such a character as unbelief supposes the disciples to have been.

I must now ask the reader's attention to a few striking traits in our Lord's moral teaching. Taken as a whole, it possesses that unity of conception which is the acknowledged characteristic of the productions of single minds. It bears none of the marks which a set of aphorisms bear, when they have been selected out of a number of other systems, and attempted to be woven into a whole. It is admitted to be a moral system of the greatest elevation. It is one which is Catholic; *i.e.*, it is one founded on nothing which is merely local or temporary, but is applicable to the whole family of man. It is one in which the principles of casuistry find no place. It comprehends in itself all possible moral obligation, and embraces in its great principles every duty which is due from man to God, or from man to man. It is one immensely elevated above the moral and spiritual atmosphere of the times in which it originated, and of the narrow-minded of the particular race in the midst of which it was born. All these are simple facts, and many others might be added.

Some traits of our Lord's moral teaching.

It is a unity.

It is Catholic.

It is all-comprehensive.

It is immensely above the times.

Now, if in accordance with the general theory I am controverting, the Gospels chiefly consist of a

mass of myths and legends, it follows that those portions of their moral teaching which are closely interwoven with their legendary matter must have been the invention of mythologists, who must have spontaneously elaborated portions of it, which have been woven into a whole by the authors of our present Gospels. Further, numerous as they were, they must not only have been all elevated above the conception of the times in which they lived, but they must have concurred as to the line of moral teaching which was to be attributed to Jesus, and as to what constituted the highest type of morality. If, on the other hand, it is urged that the authors of our Gospels selected those of the current legends which presented an elevated type of morality, and rejected the remainder, then not only would the Gospels bear clear indications of such a selection, but it would still be necessary to attribute the invention of this elevated moral teaching to a number of credulous mythologists. It is scarcely necessary for me to waste the reader's time in proving that the theories above referred to are utterly incredible.

It is incredible that the moral teaching of the Christ of the Gospels could have been invented by credulous mythologists.

10. The mythologists who invented the ideal matter, of which the Gospels are alleged mainly to consist, must have been men of either Jewish or Grecian culture. Of these the former must have been by far the most numerous; and we have abundant testimony how deeply the principles

The supposed inventors of the Gospels must have been either Jew or Greek, and must have impressed their ideas on the character they portrayed.

of Judaism were impressed on the Jews of the Apostolic age. But according to all the laws which regulate the production of myths and legends, such productions are an embodiment of the feelings and ideas of their inventors, *i.e.*, those invented by Jews would have been an embodiment of Jewish, and those by Greeks of the Grecian type of thought. But as a matter of fact, the Jesus of the Evangelists is neither Jew nor Greek, nor an amalgamation of both, but as broad as humanity itself, *i.e.*, He is a character completely Catholic. What follows? If the theories against which I am contending are correct, these credulous mythologists must have concurred, without previous concert, in delineating a number of ideal creations, which, when placed side by side in our Gospels, have formed the great character, which is neither Jew nor Greek, but absolutely Catholic. The reader will, I think, be of opinion that such a theory is absolutely incredible.

The Jesus of the Evangelists is a completely Catholic character.

11. The Evolution theory, or the theory of tendencies, has some difficulties which are peculiar to itself, to which I must invite the attention of the reader. Briefly stated, this theory is as follows:—

The theory of tendencies.

According to it the primitive churches were divided into a number of discordant sects, among whom party spirit raged with violence. These elaborated a set of doctrines and fictitious stories, for the purpose of embodying their own particular

Supposed compromises between discordant schools.

tendencies. When this sectarian spirit had risen to a dangerous height, it was found desirable to effect compromises between these discordant schools. Of this spirit of compromise, St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are alleged to be striking examples. Both works are said to have been composed for the purpose of mediating between two contending parties, the Petrine and the Pauline, and thereby of aiding in the creation of a common Christianity. For this purpose their author is alleged to have largely modified the materials of which he was in possession, and to have imparted a strong colouring to most of the miracles which are recorded in the latter book, if he did not actually invent them.

In addition to the difficulties with which this theory, in common with those which we have already considered, is encumbered, it contains one remarkable assumption which contradicts all the facts of human nature. It assumes that a number of compromises have been effected in the Church, and that Catholic Christianity has grown out of them. But what says the voice of history respecting the quarrels of religious creeds? Do they effect compromises? Do they conclude treaties, or propound irenicons? Have mediators arisen, who have succeeded in forming out of several contending sects a united church? On these points history returns no ambiguous answer. Party spirit in

The theory contradicts the facts of human nature and history.

religion, instead of effecting compromises, goes on continually widening. Witness the history of the internal divisions of all the religions in the world. When have a number of contending sects fused into one, and out of the fusion erected a common Church? It has passed into a common proverb that nothing is more irreconcileable than religious divisions. Yet without these compromises the theory of tendencies cannot advance a step. It is one, therefore, which, while it may look plausible in the study, is dashed to pieces against the facts of history and the realities of human nature.

The history of religious divisions

Their irreconcileable character.

It is a matter of indifference with respect to the foregoing arguments whether the materials out of which the Evangelists composed our Gospels were oral traditions, or, as some contend, written documents, or were partly written and partly oral. If we adopt the theory that the Synoptic Gospels were composed by the aid of previously existing documents, then it is evident that the character which they delineate must have been already portrayed in these documents, only with somewhat less of detail. The question, therefore, still demands an answer, How did it get into these earlier documents? The documents themselves must have been composed from traditions, which, if the Gospels are unhistorical, must have been a set of legendary inventions. It follows, therefore, whether we assume the Gospels to have been composed by the

The nature of the original materials of the Gospels a matter of indifference.

The question to be answered is, How did the character get there?

Answers to the question.

aid of existing documents, or that the Evangelists drew directly from tradition, that the portraiture of Jesus must have been formed out of what was once a floating mass of legends; and further, that these legends must have had numerous inventors.

It follows, therefore, whatever alternative we adopt, that the great character delineated in the Gospels must have been the creation of the persons who originally invented the legends of which it is composed, each one having portrayed that portion of it which is contained in the narrative which he invented. The only other possible supposition is that the conception of the character was already so deeply impressed on the minds of the mythologists, that the legends which they invented became stamped with its moral impress; but this supposition is inconsistent with the theories which we have been considering, for it presupposes the character already to have been in existence, and consequently to have been the delineation of an historical reality.

The unity of the character of the Christ of the Synoptics almost universally conceded.

I have assumed throughout this entire argument that the reader of the Gospels instinctively perceives that the delineation of their Christ constitutes a unity of conception. I do not think that this has ever been denied with respect to the Synoptics, except in a very few cases, which are not worthy of notice, against the all but universal consent to the contrary. The objections which have been urged against the character are

directed against the perfection of certain aspects of it, such as those which have been urged by Mr. F. Newman and a similar class of objectors. Into their minute, and frequently most captious criticisms, it is not my purpose to enter; the fact will be sufficient that its greatness is not only unanimously affirmed by Christians, but freely conceded by the majority of eminent unbelievers. But the case is somewhat different with respect to the fourth Gospel. It has been affirmed that the Jesus of this Gospel differs widely from the Jesus of the Synoptics.

The Christ of the fourth Gospel said to be different.

Here I would ask the reader particularly to observe that if all that has been alleged by critical unbelief on this subject were conceded to be correct, the above arguments will remain totally unaffected by this concession. The unity of the character of the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels is sufficient to sustain their entire weight. Even if the Gospel of St. John were proved to be a forgery, and its portraiture to be that of a different Christ from the Christ of the Synoptics, still it would be impossible to account for the unity of the character of the Synoptic Christ, except on the assumption that it is the delineation of an historical reality. The question would still retain all its force, if it is an ideal creation, how did their portraitures get into the Synoptics? The argument is undoubtedly strengthened, if the four

Even were the fourth Gospel given up as a forgery, the question of the origin of the character of the Christ of the Synoptics would retain all its force.

portraitures are portraitures of one and the same Christ; but it does not depend on this for its validity, nor does the assumption of the unhistorical character of the fourth Gospel get rid of one of the difficulties with which the theories which are propounded by unbelievers are attended.

But the four portraitures are all of one and the same Christ.

My position, however, is that the four portraitures are portraitures of one and the same Christ, only differing from one another in the point of view in which they have been taken; but I fully admit that the point of view from which the author of the fourth Gospel contemplated the character, differs more from that of the Synoptics than any one of the three differs from the others.

The Jesus of the Synoptics makes assertions respecting Himself, of which the assertions in the fourth Gospel are the vindication

The facts stand as follows. While it is unquestionable that the Jesus of the fourth Gospel habitually makes higher assertions respecting Himself than the Jesus of the Synoptics, the Jesus of the Synoptics puts in claims in His various utterances, of which the truth of the assertions in the fourth Gospel is the vindication. My meaning will be rendered clear by a few illustrations. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord claims for His utterances, as legislator of the kingdom of heaven, not only a higher authority than those which Moses uttered in the name of God, but that they are on a level with those uttered by the Divine Voice at Sinai. In like manner, throughout His entire teaching, He speaks

in the highest tones of authority; but the authority is none other than His own. This authoritative form of His utterances, as we are informed by the Evangelists, formed a very striking feature in His teaching, and particularly arrested the attention of His hearers. St. Matthew says (vii. 29)—

The authoritative form of Christ's utterances.

"The multitudes were astonished at His teaching, for He spake as one having authority."

He also claims supreme regard and the highest self-sacrifice on the part of His disciples, founded on His own inherent worthiness—a regard so great, as to be entitled to supersede the strongest natural ties which unite man to man. Thus He affirms—

He claims supreme devotion to Himself.

"He that loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me; he that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."—Matthew x. 36, 37.

Again,

"Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth Me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."—Matthew viii. 38; Luke xii. 8, 9.

Again and again he affirms that He it is, and no other, who will determine the final destinies of man, as a righteous judge, in conformity with their conduct here; and in a remarkable parabolic utterance, He gives us the delineation of Himself as the King thus seated on the throne of His

He claims to be the Arbiter of men's final destinies.

glory, with all nations assembled before Him. Further, in performing His miracles, he uniformly works them in His own name, without referring to any other than Himself. Thus a suppliant leper cries—

He works miracles in His own name.

> "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." "I will," is the reply. "Be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."—Matthew viii. 3.

Again, to the sick of the palsy—

> "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed."—Mark ii. 11.

And in the case of every other miracle, He uses similar language. The careful reader of the Synoptics will find numerous instances of these authoritative utterances, which it is unnecessary to particularize.

Such claims would be presumptuous if made by a mere man.

These and other similar claims which are made by the Jesus of the Synoptics would be the height of presumption if their utterer were a mere man, who was devoid of all consciousness of the indwelling of the divine. In fact their arrogance would be so great, as to be inconsistent with the presence of holiness, not to say humility, in any purely human character. They are indefinitely higher than those made by the greatest of great men known to history. Neither prophet nor apostle ventures to use such language. Their only vindication is the consciousness on the part of the utterer of the indwelling of the divine.

The consciousness of the indwelling of the divine in the utterer is their only vindication.

This being so, the utterances of our Lord in

the fourth Gospel, if true, are their ample vindication. The case stands thus.

They are amply vindicated by the utterances of the fourth Gospel.

This Gospel is the complement of the utterances in the Synoptics, and the claims put forth in the Synoptics of the utterances in the fourth Gospel. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," is the utterance of the Christ of St. John. The Synoptic Christ says, "Stretch forth thy hand," and the hand is restored.

The fourth Gospel is the complement of the utterances in the Synoptics.

But although our Lord's affirmations respecting Himself are more lofty than those in the Synoptics, His teaching in both is indelibly impressed with the same moral character; it is in fact the teaching of the same Jesus.

Our Lord's teaching in all the Gospels impressed with same moral character.

On the other hand, when we compare the two sets of narratives as distinct from the discourses, the two characters which they delineate are identical. It has been alleged that the Johannine Christ is depicted as more divine and less human than the Synoptic Christ. This I deny; and as the point is one of considerable importance, I must afford proof of it. One passage in the Synoptics contains affirmations made by our Lord respecting Himself quite as elevated as anything which can be found in the fourth Gospel; in fact it forms their connecting link. It is as follows:—

Proof that the Johannine is not more divine and less human than the Synoptic Christ.

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things

Claim advanced by the Synoptic Christ.

are delivered unto Me of My Father; and none knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden light."—Matt. xi. 25–30.

No higher claim is recorded in the fourth Gospel.

It would be difficult to find any utterance of our Lord which is recorded in the fourth Gospel, which claims for Himself a more superhuman character than the one before us. It affirms that He possesses an exclusive knowledge of the Father; and that none knows Him but the Father, or the Father but Himself, and that all things are delivered by the Father into His hands; and in virtue of this superhuman character He invites those who labour and are heavy laden to obtain rest in Him, affirming that the yoke and the burden which He will impose on them is light; but at the same time they are His yoke and His burden.

The fourth Gospel contains delineations of Christ's character as human as the Synoptics.

But while the fourth Gospel frequently attributes to our Lord the strong dogmatical assertions respecting the dignity of His person, which we read in its pages, it delineates the other portions of His character as being equally human as those in the Synoptics. Thus St. John describes Him as sitting at Jacob's well, wearied with His journey; the Synoptics on several occasions describe Him as retiring to rest Himself after His day's labour. In the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, the fourth Gospel represents Him as shedding tears of

Christ at the grave of Lazarus.

sympathy, and the whole description, while attributing to Him a highly divine character, invests Him with a number of characteristics which are pre-eminently human. Similarly the third Gospel depicts Him as shedding tears, and uttering the most pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem, and its impending ruin. So again the description of the last supper in the Johannine Gospel, delineates Him as exhibiting precisely the same aspects of character, as in the Synoptics, only in the former, its traits are more delicately drawn. Similar also is the narrative of the betrayal, the trial, and the crucifixion. All this is utterly inconsistent with the theory, which asserts that the author of this Gospel was so intent on delineating a divine Christ, that he has suppressed some of those human aspects of His character, which are conspicuous in the Synoptics. In both the identity of character is unmistakable.

Luke's account of Christ weeping over Jerusalem.

The Johannine description of the last supper

The same Christ is depicted in all the Gospels.

This identity will become apparent, if we institute a comparison between an entire section in the Synoptics, and a corresponding one in the fourth Gospel. As it is the longest and most complete, I will take that which, on the theory that the Gospels are unhistorical, may not inaptly be designated the Drama of the Passion. It will only be necessary to notice the chief incidents.

The narrative in question begins with the account of the anointing of our Lord at Bethany. It is

The narrative of the passion

narrated both by the Synoptics and St. John, but in a different connection. It is remarkable that the latter omits an utterance of our Lord, which proves that He accepted the act as having a certain divine significance:

> "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."—Matthew xxvi. 13.

But in all other respects, the descriptions are precisely alike.

Comparison of the several records.

To this follows the account in the fourth Gospel of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in which all four Evangelists represent our Lord as, prior to His great act of self-sacrifice, assuming the character of the King Messiah. Notwithstanding a considerable number of minor variations, the delineations are similar throughout, except that the Synoptics attribute to Him the high Messianic act of cleansing the temple, which in this place is omitted by St. John. At this point the narratives diverge, those of the Synoptics representing Him as engaged during the days which intervened between His entry and His passion, in teaching in the temple, and in discussions with the Jews, while that of St. John records only an interview with some Greeks, in which He is depicted in an aspect pre-eminently human. On the other hand, the Synoptical delineations depict our Lord during this interval in an attitude pre-eminently divine.

I allude to His great eschatological discourse, which is recorded by all three Synoptics, and the supplemental parable of the last judgment, which is attributed to Him by St. Matthew. This discourse in conjunction with this parable, contains the greatest and most perfect delineation of our Lord in the divine and human aspects of His character which is to be found in the New Testament, and is certainly not exceeded by any thing which is affirmed respecting Him in the fourth Gospel. So far the aspect of the Christ of this Gospel is more human than the Christ of the Synoptics.

Comparison of the various narratives of the passion.

Next follows the narrative of the last supper. That of John, while differing in numerous points of minor details, which have no bearing on our present argument, from those of the Synoptics, consists of three scenes, the washing of the disciples' feet, the detection and exposure of Judas, and the warning given to Peter. In each of these our Lord is delineated as the perfect combination of dignity with humility and condescending love, yet in an aspect exquisitely human. No bare description of it will do it justice.

The narrative of the last supper.

But how stands the case with the Synoptics? It is clear that all four Evangelists intended on this occasion to delineate our Lord in His profoundest humiliation; and it is equally certain, notwithstanding their variations, that the conception is identical in all four writers. The two

The conception identical in all the accounts.

last incidents in the Johannine account form a portion of that of the Synoptics, while the first is omitted; and in St. Luke's Gospel there is inserted in place of it an account of a contest for superiority among the disciples at the very supper-table; and our Lord's rebuke of it. This discourse however contains a very remarkable utterance of our Lord (Luke xxii. 29, 30):

> "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

It thus combines the highest self-assertion with profound humiliation.

So far the Johannine narrative, as distinguished from the discourses, does not disclose a single trait of a conscious purpose to depict a more divine Christ, or to invest Him with less human feelings, than the Christ of the Synoptics.

The discourses in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of St. John, and in the 24th and 25th of Matthew.

But how about the long discourse in chapters 14, 15, and 16, of St. John's Gospel, terminated by the prayer of intercession? Is not this intended to invest our Lord with a halo of glory prior to His passion, and to depict Him as pre-eminently divine. I answer that the divine aspect of His character as set forth in this discourse, is not greater than in Matthew 24th and 25th, which was uttered less than two days before the one we are now considering, both alike being spoken under the shadow of the cross. In both our Lord is described as in-

vesting Himself with superhuman greatness, immediately before His deepest humiliation, and in both alike He is invested with sympathies pre-eminently human. So far the Christ of this Gospel is certainly identical with the Christ of the Synoptics.

The Christ of St. John identical with the Christ of the Synoptics.

We now pass on to the scenes of the arrest and trial. Here the details differ considerably, the Johannine narrative passing over in silence the account of the agony in the Garden; yet the same fundamental conception pervades all four narratives, viz., that of our Lord's voluntary self-surrender. This is expressed in the fourth Gospel, by the mode in which Jesus is represented as going to meet the band at the entrance of the garden; in the Synoptics, by the declaration that He had only to pray to His Father, and He would presently send Him more than twelve legions of angels. It is simply absurd to affirm that either incident was invented for the purpose of heightening the effect. Certainly His consciousness, as it is depicted by St. John, is not more divine than as it is depicted by the Synoptics. Both delineations are portraitures of Jesus supported by the consciousness of the indwelling of the divine in the act of voluntarily yielding Himself up to death. It is worthy of remark, that the Synoptics describe Him immediately before His condemnation as making a deliberate assertion of His superhuman character, in the presence of the

The arrest and the trial.

Jewish council, which incident is passed over in silence in the fourth Gospel. The only counterpart to it in this Gospel, is our Lord's assertion of His royal dignity before Pilate. Thus each character fits harmoniously into the other.

The omission of the agony in St. John's Gospel.

But what about the omission in this Gospel of the account of the agony in the garden? Is not the objection which has often been urged true, that its author omitted it of set purpose, fearing that His divine Christ could not endure the weight of so great a humiliation? That such an objection can have been made in the face of the facts above referred to, and numerous others contained in this Gospel, is only one of many proofs, that the enunciators of certain theories are ready to accept anything which is in accordance with their preconceived opinions, on a very slender foundation of evidence. It is now impossible to determine with absolute certainty, what was the reason which induced the author of this Gospel to omit from his account of the passion, any reference to the agony in the garden; but nothing can be more certain than that it could not have been that which has been alleged by the school of critics to which I allude; for while he has omitted the account of the agony, he alone of the Evangelists gives us an account of another perturbation of our Lord occasioned by the prospect of His sufferings and death, which occurred only two days previously.

Another perturbation recorded by him.

Both accounts depict Him in an aspect equally human. It will be necessary to set both before the reader.

The following is the Johannine portraiture—

The Johannine portraiture.

"And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. . . . Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. . . . Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."—John xii. 23–32.

The following is one of the Synoptical delineations of the subsequent agony:—

The Synoptical delineations.

He said unto them, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He cometh unto His disciples, and findeth them asleep; and He saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done. And He came, and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."—Matthew xxvi. 36–44.

The self-surrender of Jesus.

On this follows the narrative of His voluntary surrender into the hands of His enemies.

The reader will observe that the sentiment expressed in both passages is identical, viz., that Jesus was perturbed at the contemplation of His sufferings now just impending over Him; that He uttered a prayer for deliverance from them, and that after the prayer, perfect calmness returned, and the full purpose of submission to the divine will. So far the Synoptic narrative of the Agony differs from the perturbation described by St. John, only in the threefold repetition of the prayer, and in the language in which it is expressed. Both alike are described as having been uttered under the immediate shadow of the cross.

The perturbation and the agony.

If the fourth Gospel is a forgery, its author must have been an adept at his art; for its delineations are almost perfect of their kind. But the idea that he invented the narrative of the perturbation, and suppressed that of the agony, for the purpose of imparting a more divine aspect to his Master's character, is only consistent with his having been little better than a bungler: for the description of the Synoptics is the grander of the two, and the submission of the will of the sufferer to that of the Father is absolute and complete. The struggle and final submission, as it is depicted in the Synoptics, is Godlike and, at the same time, intensely human; and is strictly in conformity with the character of the Johannine Christ.

The Synoptical description the grander.

The narrative of the condemnation, and of the

crucifixion, calls for little remark. Here again the incidents are extremely varied; but this only imparts a greater force to my argument: for not a single circumstance affects the identity of the character. It is impossible to affirm that the author of the fourth Gospel has imparted a more divine or a less human character to our Lord, either before Pilate or on the cross, than is attributed to Him by the Synoptics. If he has omitted the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" which is attributed to Him by the latter, he has inserted that of "I thirst," which they pass over in silence. Surely this is as truly human as the former. Again, if he has attributed to Him, just prior to His death, the triumphant cry, "It is finished," we know from the Synoptics, that He uttered some cry, which infused awe into the mind of the centurion, and the exclamation itself has its complete counterpart in St. Luke's Gospel, in His answer to the prayer of the repentant robber, that He would remember him when He came into His kingdom: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

The narrative of the condemnation and the crucifixion.

From these considerations the following conclusion is a necessary consequence. The Johannine Christ and the Synoptic Christ are portraitures of the same character, only varying from each other in the points of view from which their authors contemplated him; and the more numerous

The Johannine Christ and the Synoptic Christ are portraitures of the same character.

the variations are in the details, the stronger is the evidence which they afford of identity, for if there had been any conscious purpose of imparting a more divine character to his Christ than the reality in the author of the fourth Gospel, it would have certainly manifested itself in these variations. The portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists, therefore, not only forms an harmonious unity of character throughout, but the assertion that the Johannine Christ differs in point of character from the Christ of the Synoptics is utterly unfounded. Our position, therefore, is a most favourable one. We have not one only, but four portraitures of our Lord, no two of which are identical, thus proving the independence of the delineators; but all four possessing that essential unity of conception, which is the characteristic of historical reality, but which is unattainable in the ideal inventions of multitudes of mythologists.

The allegation that they are different characters utterly unfounded.

In conclusion, there are only two possible alternatives: the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels is either the delineation of an historical reality, or it is an ideal creation. The first of these alternatives satisfies all the historical conditions of the case; the second, none. Nay, more, as I have proved above, it involves a mass of hopeless contradictions and absurdities, in the possibility of which reason refuses to believe. It follows, therefore, that the portraiture of the Christ of the

All the conditions fully satisfied by the conclusion that the Christ of the Gospels is an historical reality.

Gospels is the delineation of an historical reality. This being so, Christianity carries with it all the consequences of being a divine revelation. These consequences I will sum up in our Lord's own words :—

Christianity carries with it all the consequences of being a divine revelation.

The consequences summed up.

"Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that beholdeth Me, beholdeth Him that sent Me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me may not abide in darkness. And if any man hear My sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not : for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My sayings, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from Myself ; but the Father which sent Me, He hath given Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life eternal : the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak."—John xii. 44–50, Revised Version.

Let us therefore accept His gracious invitation :

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."
Matt. xi. 28–30.

And His declaration that His person is the revelation of the Father.

THE

VITALITY OF THE BIBLE

BY THE

REV. W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

Argument of the Tract.

Some facts are adduced to show the falsity of Voltaire's prophecy, that in a hundred years the Bible would be a forgotten book, and how utterly he and others failed to apprehend its wonderful vitality. In inquiring into this vitality, the origin and history of the book are first examined, with a view to bring out that a volume of such manifold authorship could have no unity or coherence had its composition not been guided by a Divine power. The next inquiry is, What does the Bible *say*—what is the principle of unity in its contents? In answer to this, the view dwelt on is, that from first to last the Bible reveals God drawing near to sinful man in the way of grace, and encourages him to hope in His mercy. It is further shown that this mercy comes through a Mediator, and the plan and work of Christ in Scripture are shown to be one of the great means of its influence. Next it is inquired, What the Bible *does?* The effects on individuals and society are touched on. But are there not difficulties that interfere with the conclusion that the Bible is from God? There are difficulties, but they do not weaken this conclusion. Is then the great power of the Bible simply in the book as a book? It has power as a book, but its great power is derived from its being used as the medium by which the Holy Spirit works. To recognize this gives confidence and strength; to forget it plunges into error and weakness. Finally, reference is made to some other elements of the vitality of the Bible, and in the end to its remarkable hopefulness, especially with a view to the winding up of the Church's history.

THE VITALITY OF THE BIBLE.

EIGHTEEN hundred years ago, the apostle Peter spoke of "the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Seventeen hundred years passed away, and the Book which we call "the Word of God" still retained the vitality of which the apostle spoke. About that time the cleverest man in Europe determined to strip it of its ancient character. Voltaire boasted that it had taken twelve men to set up Christianity, but he would show that a single man was enough to overthrow it. He ventured too on a prophecy. He said that in a hundred years the Bible would be a forgotten book. About the time when we now write it should have been laid up in the collections of antiquarians, and taken from its musty shelf only as we take Chinese or Indian idols, to show our Sunday-school children the absurdities of superstition. Which of the two prophecies is it that stands fulfilled to-day —the simple-minded apostle's, or the brilliant Frenchman's?

Voltaire's prophecy about the Bible.

Let us answer by reference to a single scene.

The Bible more honoured than ever.

About the time when the Bible should have become a forgotten book, two companies of distinguished scholars were holding frequent meetings in the chief city of the world, and often spending hours in considering the best rendering of a Greek or a Hebrew phrase. For years upon years they were giving many of their best days to such work, straining their faculties to their utmost, exchanging views, weighing arguments, praying for light, hesitating, reconsidering, delaying, resuming, and finally deciding on the points that gave them so much anxiety. What was it all about? About the book which Voltaire had said would be forgotten in a century. They felt it of infinite moment that every word of that book should have the most exact rendering in English that the resources of our language could afford. They were overwhelmed at the thought of the consequences of error or failure in the task they had undertaken. In this attitude of laborious carefulness they were sustained by the cordial approval of the whole community. And when a portion of their labours was finished, the swiftest engines that skill could frame were kept at work day and night multiplying copies of what, after all, was but a revision of a former translation. The demand for the work was so great that about two million copies were absorbed in these islands alone.

The Bible is a unique phenomenon. It holds

and has held in this world a place never equalled, never even approached by any other book. Its position cannot reasonably be ascribed to artificial causes. Under peculiar circumstances, indeed, certain books may have a popularity utterly beyond their intrinsic worth. Their authors may have obtained distinction in other fields. Persons of great influence may take a fancy to them and create a demand for them; or their sale may be bolstered up by those who have a money interest in their success. But the popularity of such books is but the wonder of a day. No book can retain permanent power and popularity through artificial causes. It is silliness to speak of the Bible as the mere offspring of superstition, maintained in its place from age to age through the mere force of tradition, the dead weight of conservatism. A book that for eighteen centuries has run the gauntlet of every variety both of rude assault and of subtle criticism; a book that has thrown its pages open to every eye, that has challenged the reverence of the highest, and defied the scorn of the proudest; a book that has not hesitated to assert its claim as the record of God's revelation for man's redemption, and the expression of what God requires of man on pain of everlasting death—such a book, retaining its high place for eighteen centuries, cannot but possess intrinsic qualities of the highest order. It is undeniable that it has

Its vitality cannot be due to artificial causes.

Some books have an ephemeral popularity.

The Bible cannot be of this class.

an extraordinary vitality. It never becomes antiquated, never survives its usefulness, never acquires a decrepit look: "Time writes no wrinkles on its brow;" it flourishes in the vigour of immortal youth. In the spirit of Voltaire, infidels may boast that ere long its day will be over; they may foretel that the time is coming when Bible beliefs and Bible worship will have been laid aside by the people of this country as thoroughly as the worship of Jupiter and Apollo was abandoned by the old pagans, or the rites of Druidism by our distant ancestors. But even on the ordinary principles of human nature these prophecies are worthless. The vitality that has survived eighteen centuries must be vitality of no common type. There may be ups and downs in the history of the Bible: Amalek may prevail to-day, and Israel to-morrow; the tide is subject to ebbs and flows; but Christians may rest in full assurance of one thing, that when the end of all comes, the Bible will be found on no lower level than it occupies to-day: new proof will be given of its unexampled quality, as "the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever."

Infidel prophecies about the Bible.

Our purpose in this Tract is to inquire into the nature and causes of this remarkable phenomenon. The simple fact that the Bible has possessed such vitality is in itself striking; but the more that the subject is investigated, in all its relations and circumstances, the more remarkable will it appear,

To what is the endurance of the Bible due?

and the more conclusive will be the proof that "the Word of God liveth and abideth for ever."

I.

Past History of the Book.

In the first place, let us turn our attention to the past, and consider the origin and structure of the Bible. What is this book—commonly called *par excellence*, "the book"—the Bible? What is its past history? How did it come into existence? And what has been its fortune in the world during the time that it has existed there?

It is really sixty-six books.

Nothing can be more striking than its external history. Without going into any disputed question, we may say that in the history of books the Bible stands unexampled for the time over which its composition extended, and the variety and number of its authors. It is not a single book, but a collection of sixty-six books, longer or shorter. These were not written at one time, but during a period of fifteen or sixteen hundred years—not very much less than the duration of the Christian era.

Of very various authorship.

They were not written by members of any single caste or class; not, like the sacred books of the Egyptians, for example, by members of the priestly caste, living by themselves, understanding each other's plans and projects, and handing down from age to age the traditions that gave unity to their policy. They were written by all sorts of

persons, and in all sorts of places; by prophets, priests, kings, governors, prime ministers, herdmen, fishermen, publicans, physicians, pharisees. They were written in different languages, most in Hebrew, many in Greek, and a few portions in Chaldee. Some of the books are in the form of history, some of biography; some are poems, songs, visions, allegories; some are didactic treatises, some are familiar letters, some theological treatises, and some prophetic forecasts. In the desert of Sinai and the wilderness of Judea; in the cave of Adullam, in the public prison of Rome, and in the island of Patmos; in the palaces of Mount Zion and Shushan; by the rivers of Babylon, with harps hanging on the willows, and on the banks of the Chebar, under shadow of the great fortress of Carchemish; in the streets of Jerusalem, built up again from its ruins, and amid the music of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof—in such a vast variety of places and circumstances were the various bits of this strange mosaic constructed. No other literary phenomenon in all the world can be compared to this.

The books written at various places.

Yet it is one book.

Yet the sixty-six pieces do form one book; the mosaic is a connected whole. But how was the connection secured? If we should conceive that in England, from the fourth century to the nineteenth, sixty-six pieces of writing had been prepared by about half that number of men, by kings,

priests, scholars, peasants, fishermen, and the like, having no special connection with each other, can it be supposed that they would now form a homogeneous whole, a volume that might be bound together, and that we could read right on in our closets, in our families, and in our churches, without any sense of abrupt transition or of positive contradiction? Yet this has been the history of the Bible. Must not an unseen Power have moved so various a band of writers?

It is all connected with Palestine.

And what is still more remarkable: the authors of the Bible, though so diverse as we have seen, were all connected with one small country, and were much bound up in it and in the people that dwelt in it; their thoughts gathered round its history, and their writings are crowded with allusions to its hills and valleys, its streams and lakes and little brooks, its towns and villages,—even its individual trees, rocks, caves, and gardens. In a sense, it is a very local book, provincial, nay, parochial in its details; yet it has been accepted and adopted by all civilised nations; it is our book in England as much as it ever was the Jews' book in Palestine; by some marvellous process of transformation it has become by far the most catholic book in the world.

Yet the book is very catholic.

Let us dwell for a moment on this world-wide repute which the book has attained. Though eighteen hundred years have elapsed since the last

Its world-wide influence.

parts of it were written, it is reverenced to-day as profoundly as it ever was in Judea, and it is found as useful for practical purposes as it was by those who first listened to its message. It has been welcomed and honoured by Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free. It has been translated into some two hundred languages of the globe. Great Societies exist for the sole purpose of multiplying versions and copies, which are produced in millions year after year. In most cases, the translation of the Bible has been an era in the history of the language into which it has been rendered, fixing its grammar, enlarging its scope, and refining its quality. In the more civilized countries where it is received it is not enough to have a single version of it; scholar after scholar tries to improve the rendering, and, as we have said, companies of revisers sit and labour for years in the endeavour to give a more exact meaning of the original phrase. Other scholars, like Tischendorf, wander hither and thither, rummaging among the driest parchments, the most time-worn fragments of ancient writings; and if they chance to discover some very old and [illegible] manuscript of a part of the Bible, words [illegible] tell their delight, nor can figures express [illegible] of the discovery. If, by some rare concurrence of circumstances, there should be discovered the original manuscript of any book of the Bible, it would

Collateral influence of translations.

Value of Biblical manuscripts

be welcomed like a treasure direct from heaven—it would be by far the most sacred possession that earth contains.

Biblical literature.

Of the sixty-six books there is hardly one on which commentaries have not been written that would fill a library. Were we to set about computing all the literature that has sprung from the Bible, we should be more baffled than in trying to count the stars of heaven. Were we to glance at the history of art, to try to reckon all the paintings of the first quality that have been founded on Bible scenes, or the music that has been inspired by Bible truths, or the poetry that has owed its soul to Bible influence, or the civilizations it has moulded, or the legislations it has controlled, or the institutions it has created, we should hardly be less perplexed.

Influence of Bible in art, etc.

Its power in individual and family life.

And what a power the Bible is in individual and family life! Usually it is the first book a child is taught to know; it is the last on the pillow of the dying The y[illegible]ng man beginning life reads it to [illegible]himself against temptation; the old man on [illegible] life reads it to comfort himself under sorrow, [illegible] off the desolation of bereavement, and to [illegible]anew that charm of hope which keeps the [illegible]when all else is old.

Can all this be the result of sheer superstition and misguided imagination? Have so many generations of men been the dupes of one gigantic

fraud, dancing after a will-o'-the-wisp, imagining that they had found a treasure, in reality as baseless as any child's dream of fairyland? Is there not something more than remarkable, something quite unexampled, in the past history of this book? With such a history and such an influence, must it not possess a far more than human vitality; must it not really be "the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever?"

Resulting proof that it is the Word of God.

II.

Distinctive character of the Bible.

From its past history, let us proceed to examine the book itself, to search out its contents, and investigate its distinctive character. What is the great burden of its message? What constitutes its vital unity, giving a common character to Genesis and Revelation, to Joshua and the Acts, to Chronicles and Corinthians, to Isaiah and Paul? The answer to these questions opens a wide door, and to be given fully would need a treatise. And yet there is one short answer to them, one that is well adapted to throw light on our present inquiry into the vitality of the book. If we were asked to say in a single word, what is the great burden of the Bible message to man? What is the aspect of God's character, or His attitude toward man that dominates the whole Bible? our reply would be—

GOD DRAWING NEAR TO MAN IN THE WAY OF GRACE, AND ENCOURAGING HIM TO HOPE IN HIS MERCY, THROUGH A MEDIATOR.

The attitude of God in the Bible.

To illustrate this, let us take the first scene after the fall in paradise. Genesis iii. 9—"The Lord God called unto Adam, and said, Where art thou?" This may be regarded as the germ of the whole Bible. Man has fallen, and afraid of God, has hid himself; but God comes to look for him, and hold out the hope of mercy to him after all. In this passage we have God *seeking after guilty, ruined man.* He might have left him to his fate, but He does not. He comes down to the garden which man has desecrated by sin, and He calls to him, trembling in his hiding place. No doubt He pronounces on Adam the sentence of the criminal, and He drives him out of paradise. But this is not all. A door of hope is opened in the sentence inflicted on the tempter—"the seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." Man is not to be abandoned to this enemy; deliverance is to come to him through his own seed. We shall speak afterwards of this promise; meanwhile what we dwell on is the fact, that after he has fallen God approaches him, no doubt with a word of judgment, but also with a word of cheer and hope. This, we say, is the essence of the whole Bible.

It shows God seeking after man

From Genesis to Revelation we find the same thing—God looking down on man while struggling

The Shepherd is seeking for his lost sheep.

in the billows of sin and guilt, and stretching out His hand to save him. From first to last the Shepherd goes among the mountains to seek for the sheep that was lost. One of the wonderful felicities of the three parables of our Lord—the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the lost son —was, that they at once summed up the whole history of the past, indicated the great transaction of the present, and foretold the history of the future. They brought into a focus the whole story of God's dealings with man. In another sense these dealings were brought to a focus in the cross of Christ. Jesus was the subject of His own parables. The history of the past, and particularly the history of Israel, showed that God had never abandoned man—that He had gone after him through all his wanderings and all his wickedness, in order to recover him and lead him back to the true fountain of living waters. The incarnation and the crucifixion showed the climax of the Divine solicitude for the restoration of man. Not only did God dwell among men, in the person of His Son, not only did He become one with the race, but He bore the penalty of their transgression, in order that He might save them. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The greatest event in Bible history is just the summing up of all that preceded it. The Good Shepherd who had

Climax of this revelation in incarnation and crucifixion.

all along been following the sheep came nearer to them than ever, and suffered in their room that their sins might be forgiven, and that they might be led to the green pastures and still waters of eternal life.

The Old Testament shows man forsaking God—God following man.

Let us glance along the Old Testament history, and see whether this was not God's attitude from the beginning. We have seen that when He sent man out of paradise, He did not leave him to fall constantly more and more under the power of his enemy, till he should be hopelessly ruined, but gave him a door of hope, gave him reason to trust in His mercy. Notwithstanding all God did, however, corruption increased among men; they came to the very verge of extinction, the water of the flood seemed to threaten universal death; but God drew near to Noah in the way of grace, and encouraged him, as He had encouraged Adam, to hope in His mercy. Again, however, after the flood, the process of corruption set in; idolatry became rampant, even in the plains of Mesopotamia; but God again interposed in the way of grace, rescued Abraham from the idolatry of his brethren, and made a covenant with him, promising that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The covenant was renewed to the patriarchs, and under its protection the family of Israel went to sojourn in Egypt. But the trouble now did not set in from within; persecu-

Noah.

Abraham.

In Egypt.

tion came from without: and again God drew near in the way of grace, delivering His people from Egypt, and giving them encouragement in ways without number to hope in His mercy. Ages rolled on; after they were settled in Canaan, new revelations of the Divine mercy were given; songs of redemption, calling on Israel to hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there was mercy, and with Him was plenteous redemption, became national songs for the people, and in their sacred books, revelations of the coming redemption became brighter and clearer. But if God was revealing Himself more clearly, the force of corruption was working more intensely; chastisement followed, till the whole head was sick and the whole heart faint; the mighty Nebuchadnezzar dragged into captivity to Babylon nearly all who had been spared by the sword, pestilence, and famine.

In Canaan.

But the same God who came to seek for Adam among the trees of the garden, came to seek for Israel beside the rivers of Babylon. He drew near to them again in the way of grace, and invited them anew to hope in His mercy. He turned back the captivity of Zion, and restored the holy city. Yet new forms of corruption came in like a flood; the heart and soul declined from God's service, and the foremost professors of religion became like whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones. Once more God drew nigh, and as we have

The captivity.

said, in a form unexampled and complete; God was manifest in the flesh, and proved the infinite riches of His grace by dying for men, the just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God. The incarnation.

This was the final lesson. Nothing plainer, nothing higher, nothing fuller could ever be shown. The cross was the climax of all the past, as it was the fountain-head of all the future. After Christ, every member of His kingdom was charged in a measure to proclaim the grace of God and invite men to hope in His mercy. "Let him that heareth say, Come," was the rule of the kingdom; while men were set apart as ambassadors of the great King, to go into all the world, and proclaim the good news to every creature: to proclaim God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses, and to beseech them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. The final revelation.

This, we say, is the great feature of the whole Bible. If we read what may be called the "retrospective psalms,"—those in which the poet rehearses the past history of the nation, we find them quite in this strain. In a long series of alternating clauses, he contrasts the ever-returning backslidings of the people, with the ever-enduring mercy of Jehovah. "Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry: Lessons in the Psalms.

and He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies." What fonder or more attractive attitude could God oe seen in? Ever yearning after His foolish children; grieved for their folly and wickedness, and grieved for the misery that they drew upon themselves; watching His opportunity to speak kindly and comfortably to them, and eager above all things to get a welcome from them, when with plaintive voice He should make His appeal, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

God's attitude in Bible not as in other books and religions.

It was the remark of an eminent man, that "in other religions we see man seeking after God, in the Bible we see God seeking after man." Is it not a most interesting and blessed feature? Surely our hearts may well cling to the book that shows the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is holy, humbling Himself to behold the earth, and drawing near in grace and mercy to save, to cleanse, and to bless. And well may we cling to that part of the book which is emphatically named "the Gospel,"—the good news that not only tells us of grace abounding, but shows us God's eternal Son as the messenger of that grace; aye, and shows Him pouring out His soul unto death, that the channel might be opened in which that grace should flow.

But how are we to account for this feature of the

Bible? How comes it from Genesis to Revelation we have such a disclosure of the Divine heart, such a view of the Divine Being bending over His erring children in order to arrest and save them? How did this conception of God come into the hearts of the writers? And how did it come to be associated with the idea of a God most righteous and holy, in whose eyes evil cannot dwell and fools cannot stand?

Explanation of this feature of the Bible.

Certainly it is not man's *natural* conception of God. It is not the conception furnished in any other religion, or in any other so-called sacred book. How then came it into the heart of so many writers in succession, and how came they, at the last stage of development, to hit on the idea of the incarnation and the cross? The natural idea of man is that God is irritated; that He is not merely vexed at his sin, but that He feels bitterly towards the sinner, and that He is eager to punish him. Even with the Bible in our hands, it is often very difficult to uproot the feeling that God feels bitterly toward us. The deeper our sense of sin, the more are we disposed to think that God has a personal aversion to us. We think that He must regard us as so many sources of annoyance and trouble, and we shrink from meeting Him as we shrink from meeting any man of power and importance whom we know that we have injured and provoked.

It is not man's natural conception.

Peculiarity of Bible view of God

Now, the question is, How came the writers of the Bible to have so different a conception of God? How came they at once to intensify God's righteousness, God's hatred of sin, and yet to strip His feeling toward the sinner of all bitterness,—nay, more, to bathe it, as it were, in love? How came they all more or less to have this feeling, so that, as we have seen, God is presented throughout as drawing near to the sinner in the way of grace, and encouraging him, unworthy though he is, to hope in His mercy? How came they to see, what, outside the Bible, men have never been able to see with any clearness, "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embracing each other?" And how came they to bring all these lines of teaching to a focus in the person, the life, the parables, the miracles, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is it not plain that behind and beneath the human authorship of the Bible, it is pervaded throughout by an unseen influence from heaven? That it does not stand, like other books, on the mere gifts and attainments of its human authors, but was designed to be, what it ever has been and ever will be, the organ of the Holy Ghost, for enlightening and saving men—"the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Proof of Divine origin of Bible.

But even the most cursory view of the great

purport of the Bible, would be essentially deficient if we did not take into account what it says of the particular way of mercy God has appointed for sinful men. For it is not the lesson of the Bible that God's mercy comes to men directly and immediately; it comes by a channel of its own. It is not the teaching of the Bible that to forgive sin costs God nothing more than an act of forbearance and forgiveness costs *us* when we have sustained an injury. Mercy to the guilty comes from God through the mediation of another. There is always a third party in the transaction. To make our view more complete, therefore, of the chief feature of the Bible, we must add another clause—its object, as we have said, is to show God drawing near to man in the way of grace, and encouraging him to hope in His mercy,—*but always* THROUGH A MEDIATOR. Place of the Mediator.

It is not the doctrine of Scripture that through mere efforts of his own, man is to reinstate himself in all that he has lost. Nor is it the doctrine of Scripture that by some general law of development and improvement, things are to come round, and all is to be well again. Nor, still further, is it the doctrine of Scripture that God is to restore all things in the same way in which in nature He restores the stript tree or the trodden grass, or the fever-stricken body. There was to be a special agent of restoration—a man, yet more than man, A Mediator necessary.

having the very attributes and properties of God. The serpent was to be crushed by the seed of the woman. All nations were to be blessed in Abraham and his seed. Judah was to become somehow a praise among his brethren. A son of David was to reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. One who is termed variously the Lord's servant, the Lord's messenger, the Lord's angel, the Lord's anointed, was to become the great Fountain of benediction. Whatever instalments of blessing might come earlier, the great ocean of blessing was to be revealed only when He should come to dwell with men.

Messianic thread in Old Testament.

Hence that feature of the Old Testament which attracts every eye—its prophetic Messianic strain, its wistful looking forward, its testimony to Him who was to come. No other book is marked by any such feature. Whatever knowledge of the future might be claimed under other religious systems, prophecy had no such place in any of them as it has in the Hebrew Scriptures. Pagan religions might claim to possess a certain knowledge of the future; the soothsayer might pretend to divine the course of things, or the mysterious voice from the shrine of Delphi might utter some forecast of a coming event. But in no ancient book or ancient religion do we find any parallel to that stream of Messianic prediction which runs through the whole Old Testament. Nowhere else is there

This feature peculiar to Bible.

such a looking forward to a definite event in the future that was to constitute the turning-point of the world's history, or to the coming of One, who, while a man, was to be much more than a man, who was to complete the economy of redemption, and bring to perfection God's dispensation of grace.

Prominence of Mediator in Bible.

The figure of this great Mediator of blessing is conspicuous through all Scripture. The Old Testament looks forward to Him; in the Gospels He is present; while the epistles look back on Him, and at the same time present the hope of another advent, yet to be realized. In the Bible, the history of the world thus acquires a unity which it never attains in any other way. Men of great intellect struggle hard to unravel the tangled web of human events, and to find amid all their diversities and vicissitudes something like a beginning, a middle, and an end. The problem that baffles the human intellect is solved with ease in the Bible. The first long and often dark chapters of history prepare the way for the coming of Christ, and after His advent history describes the progress of His kingdom, which is one day to be co-extensive with the habitable earth. There is no doubt what constitutes the centre of things in Scripture. All eyes look in one direction, and find in the advent of Jesus the central fact in the world's history.

Centre of unity in history.

The prominence of Christ in the Bible, in the Old Testament as well as the New, and the signi-

Jesus Christ the glory of the Bible.

ficance of His function as the Divine agent of grace and blessing, the great Restorer and Redeemer, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, goes far to explain its vitality and vindicate its claims as the inspired Word of God. It comforts men to think of God as drawing near to them in an attitude of grace and mercy; but it more than comforts them, it satisfies them to dwell on the thought of Christ—in whom Divine grace was so gloriously revealed, not merely in the words He spoke, the promises He made, and the life of love and sympathy He led, but pre-eminently in the death He died,—"the just for the unjust, to bring them to God." Studying the revelation of the Father in the Son, they are not only assured that they have rightly understood the Divine attitude as seen in the fainter light of the Old Testament, but they see the harmony of God's attributes in the whole transaction; the entire plan of grace reflects His high perfections, and glows with the lustre of heaven. So long as men who feel that they have wandered from God, can appreciate the love that has followed them with outstretched arms and a father's yearning heart; and so long as they find this to be His attitude in every part of the Bible, and pre-eminently in those parts where either directly or symbolically Jesus Christ is set forth as the channel of Divine grace and blessing, the Bible cannot but retain its vitality—cannot but vindicate

its character as the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. As explaining, too, in some measure, the history of the world, and showing the development of the Divine plan for gathering together in Christ the shattered fragments of humanity, building up the ruined temple upon Christ as the chief corner-stone, and giving something of unity and dignity to the history of the world, it must be felt that the Bible has preeminent claims to the respect and the confidence of men.

Rationalists deny this place to Christ.

No doubt it is denied by rationalists that Jesus Christ occupies in the whole Bible that place of pre-eminence which we have claimed for Him. What are called the Messianic prophecies, it is maintained are not such really, but acquire that character by men reading into them what they find in the Gospels. The idea of a Messianic age, they say, so far as the Old Testament presents it, is merely the expression of that hope in a good time coming which is natural to the heart of man. It is natural for the oppressed to look forward to deliverance. It is natural for the sick to hope for health. In stormy weather it is natural to look for the return of calm and sunshine. The Messianic prophecies so called, were just the embodiment of these hopes, cast in a more vivid form than the common. The Hebrew nation had more hopefulness than most, and these prophetic dreams of Paradise regained were simply the outcome of sanguine temperaments,

Their explanation of the Messianic hope.

fashioning their fond imaginings of the future in forms of unusual beauty.

This explanation founded on an untruth.

But were the Hebrews a particularly hopeful people? Hopefulness is not a usual characteristic of Eastern nations, which are remarkable for their tendency to live in the present, and their comparative unconcern for the future. And as for the Hebrews, it cannot be said that as a nation it was their habit, under the pressure of present trouble, to dwell hopefully on a brighter future. Was it a hopeful spirit they showed after Moses and Aaron came to them from the burning bush, and announced God's purpose of deliverance? Was it a hopeful spirit they showed when they remembered the leeks and the garlick and the onions, and their soul loathed the light bread of the desert? Did the cry, "Make us a captain, that we may return to Egypt," indicate a hopeful spirit? or the report of the ten spies after their return from searching out the land? Or was there much hopefulness shown, far on in their history, when after the proclamation of Cyrus at Babylon, a mere fraction of the exiles availed themselves of the offer to return to their land? Not only is there no ground to say that the Hebrews as a nation were remarkable for their hopefulness, but the opposite is nearer the truth. Where a spirit of hopefulness in the future did triumph over present trouble, it was on the part of a few, and as the result of faith

The Israelites not naturally hopeful.

in the Word of God. It was faith in God's Word that made Abraham hopeful—"who against hope believed in hope." It was this, too, that led Moses to believe in the coming deliverance of the people from Egypt, and to rouse them to suitable action. It was this that made the faithful spies despise the gigantic Anakims, and urge the people to go up and take possession of the land. It was this that inspired the bright visions of Isaiah of the glory of the latter day. The temper of the people leant to despondency, and it was from the men that believed God and hoped in His word that the glorious visions of the future came. To account for the stream of Messianic prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures by saying that the people had a hopeful temperament would be like accounting for the recent revolution in the Fiji islands by saying that the natives had a benevolent and peaceful turn. It would be to mistake the effect for the cause, and in both cases alike, overlook the special action of the Spirit of God.

Hopefulness the fruit of faith.

The efforts of modern rationalism to put Christ out of the Old Testament are not more successful when attention is turned to particular passages for which a Messianic character is claimed. It is often said now that there are hardly any texts in the Old Testament that have a distinct reference to Christ. Even the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is the subject of a vehement struggle, almost ludicrous from the variety of opinion as to who is the

Particular Messianic prophecies denied.

subject of the prophet's discourse. But if the Messianic references in the Old Testament are so few and far between, how comes it that that arch-rationalist, David Strauss, in trying to account for the rapidity with which belief in Christ's miracles grew up in the early church, laid so much stress on the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament? He maintained that in ordinary circumstances it would have taken far longer time for the mythical dream that Christ wrought miracles to establish itself as a fact in the popular mind, but that the process was greatly helped and quickened by the Old Testament predictions, which ascribed to the Messiah the performance of definite miracles. Since these miracles were ascribed to Him in the Old Testament—since it was said that the ears of the deaf would be unstopped, and the eyes of the blind would see, that the lame man would leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb would sing, his early followers, said Strauss, at once inferred that such things must have been done by Him. Now, it were well for rationalism to hold to one position or another; it only exposes itself to contempt by maintaining at one time that the so-called Messianic prophecies amount to nothing, and at another time saying, with Strauss, that they were so clear, full, and explicit as to account for the early prevalence of the belief that numberless miracles were performed by Christ.

Answer from Strauss.

Inconsistency of rationalism.

But besides all this, is it not certain that even in heathen nations there prevailed a belief, as Tacitus and Suetonius testify, that a great Deliverer was to come from Judea,—a belief that must have sprung from the Hebrew prophecies, spread over the world as they were through the Septuagint translation? Did not our Lord and His apostles refer often and openly to the prophetic parts of the Hebrew Scriptures as verifying His claims? Did not the Jews themselves, for long centuries after the birth of Christ, cling to the belief that their prophets foretold a personal Messiah, who should fulfil all their pictures of peace and prosperity? And were not the early Christians in the habit of referring triumphantly to the fulfilment in Christ of the prophetic announcements, as an ample warrant for their faith in Him? In view of such considerations, Christians in our time need not be moved from the sure conviction that Jesus Christ is revealed to them in the Old Testament as well as in the New; that all through the Old Testament He is represented as the channel through whom God's grace was to flow to men; and that their visions, often so glorious, of abounding blessing and joy were due to the incomparable merit and infinite love of Him in whom it had been promised to Abraham all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

The very heathen expected a Deliverer.

Our Lord and the Jews find in Old Testament predictions of Messiah.

Let us suppose now that before knowing any-

The Messianic idea.

thing of the Gospels, we had fully gathered from the Old Testament these two ideas—that God had all along been drawing near to man in the way of grace, and that it was foretold that in the fulness of time there was to appear on earth that glorious Being through whom His grace was to be conveyed to men;—with what a strange interest should we not now open the New Testament and devour its contents, to ascertain what manner of person this great Deliverer actually was! We could not fail to have very high expectations of Him. One that should embody the yearning love of the great Father longing for His children; one that should have power to atone for the children's guilt, and to make it possible for their Father to receive them; one that should combine the sympathies of humanity with the glory of divinity; one that should be able to win them back from all the vanities that had fascinated them, and all the masters that had enslaved them, to infuse into them a heavenly temper, and make them meet for a heavenly home—what an exalted, what a wonderful Being this must be! No mere child of Adam, however gifted and however good, could fulfil the conditions demanded of one who was to embody the love of the Father, and to convey His grace to men.

The idea more than realized.

But how far are any conceptions or expectations that we might have formed beforehand exceeded by the reality! When the time came for the mani-

festation of the Messiah, there appeared One who stands without peer or parallel in the history of the world. A true brother of humanity, yet the Son of God; separate from sinners, yet the friend of sinners; pure, spotless in His whole spirit and life, and breathing forth an influence that bore men up to the gate of heaven; diffusing on every side health and benediction, and at last laying down His life as a sacrifice for His people's sins; rising from the grave, and ascending into heaven, yet ruling His church from the skies, and promising to come again to receive them to Himself, that where He was there they might also be:—this is He whom the evangelists present to us as the fulfilment of all the promises, as the Divine channel of grace and peace, the gift of God to the children of men!

Action of the early disciples.

With what unerring certainty and full assurance of faith the early disciples apprehended the glorious quality of this gift of God! Of all the tasks that rationalism has to grapple with, none is so utterly desperate as to account for the relation that sprung up between Jesus and His first disciples, on the supposition that there was nothing supernatural in His person. For that relation was not merely the relation between scholar and teacher. It was not merely the relation between servant and master, or between friend and friend. It was pre-eminently the relation between sinner and Saviour.

Their relation to Christ that of sinners to a Saviour.

They knew that He embodied the Father's love, and that He was the channel of the Father's grace. They knew that He was the Good Shepherd who had come to the bleak, storm-tost mountains to search for His lost sheep. They felt the tender touch, the fond embrace of the Shepherd, they heard His soothing voice, they were folded in His loving arms. No words could have been more charged with the love and grace of heaven than such words as His—"Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." "Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." To suffer for Him was a privilege; to die for Him the height of honour. They were "persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature would be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Gospels present the same Saviour to us.

What the living Jesus was to those who lived in His days, the four Gospels and the other books of the New Testament convey in some measure to those who have lived in later times. Seen through such a medium, the glory is less dazzling and the impression less overwhelming; but on the other hand, we have the benefit of being able to search, compare, and ponder the various records, to learn more by thus searching of the depths of the riches of the grace and love of Christ, to discover from

time to time new themes for wonder, and new grounds for reverence, trust, and affection. The book whose open page brings us into this gracious Presence, whence comes to us all that is fitted to quell our fears, soothe our sorrows, purify our hearts, and transform our lives, is surely not destined to be forgotten: while men live needing the grace and love of heaven, it must prove to be "the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever."

Analogies of Old and New Testaments.

And further, when the light of the New Testament is thrown back on the Old, new beauties are found in nearly every page. Glimpses are seen of Him who is by far the most glorious, as He is also by far the most precious personage that sinners of mankind can have to do with. Nor is this the result of mere sentiment or fancy. If God inspired the prophets to write of Christ, even though it was often dimly and indefinitely, now that we know more of Him we may trace His features, we may get glimpses of His face in many an Old Testament page. And this is not a mere work of supererogation. We ought not to say that inasmuch as the New Testament presents Christ manifest in the flesh, it is but wasting our time to look for Him in the types and shadows of the old economy. The remark is shallow, and very untrue to our nature. When objects are dear to us, and much more living persons, we delight to find resemblances to them even in reflections and shadows.

The shadows of the Old Testament a source of much interest.

Shadows in nature.

The clouds of the morning are beautiful, but not less interesting are the shadows they cast on the mountains, now swathing them in solemn, motionless folds, now scudding along their bosoms one after another, as the birds in playful glee chase each other in the air. It is delightful on the calm autumn evening to gaze on the stately crag clothed and crowned with its feathery foliage, rising abrupt from the edge of the placid lake; is it less so to gaze on its marvellous reflection beneath the surface, and see how not a twig or leaf wants its counterpart there?

> "The swan on still St. Mary's lake
> Floats double,—swan and shadow."

Interest of faint resemblances.

Who does not like to trace the faint resemblance of a beloved parent or child, whether in some dim ancestral portrait of a former generation, or in the youthful face of a living descendant? What man of science does not delight to find in the less perfect forms of animated nature analogies however faint to the more perfect? How can the poet better fulfil his vocation than when in the dim voices of nature he finds articulate echoes of the voice of God? Tell us not that when we find in the Old Testament the shadows of the New, we are wasting our time and allowing our fancy to drag us whither it will. That there has been a great amount of fantastic spiritualizing of the Old Testament, from Origen even to Jonathan Edwards,

cannot, we think, be disputed. But it is equally true that there has been a vast amount of failure in poetry—failure to bring out in song the real relations of God and nature, or of nature and man. Man's blunders in reading nature's record no more prove the record to be unworthy of study, than the bulnders of a child in reading *Paradise Lost* prove that Milton was not a poet. It is beyond reasonable doubt that the Old Testament swarms with hints and glimpses, shadows and analogies that are more fully brought to light in the New. It is equally beyond doubt that on this account it is full of profound and genuine interest to all who are concerned about the attitude of God to sinners, and the revelation of His grace; and it is certain that this feature will never cease to give vitality to the whole book;—that it will ever tend to confirm and multiply the proof that it is "the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever."

The Old Testament swarms with hints and glimpses of Christ.

III.

After considering what the Bible is, it is a natural question to ask what the Bible does. What is its effect? The spiritual experience of some men as to what they find in the Bible is not the experience of all men. It is desirable to find a more palpable test of the claims of the Book—something to prove more incontrovertibly that it is

What the Bible does.

the Word of God, and thus possesses a vitality that can never be destroyed.

Effects of Bible depend on its reception.

What, then, are the effects of the Bible? The question is not capable of a single answer because the effects of the Bible depend on how men receive it and apply it. Some even in Christian countries formally deny its authority; and some, admitting its authority in words, pay little or no heed to it in their lives. In judging of the effects of the Bible, we must lay down a canon applicable to all cases of a professed remedy for any disorder. If the question be, whether the remedy be an efficient one, an indispensable condition is, that it be applied to the disorder in the proper way. If vaccination claims to be an antidote to small-pox, its effects can be judged of only from the cases of those who have been duly and properly vaccinated. If the practice of vaccination were merely general but not universal in a community, it would be unfair to proclaim it a failure because many cases of small-pox occurred. Applying this canon of common sense to the case of the Bible, it is plain that the true effects of the Bible can be judged of only from the cases of those who accept it as the Word of God, and strive to conform in all things to its requirements. If these constitute but a fraction of a community, if the greater number adopt some other rule of life in whole or in part, it is no wonder if the result, as apparent in the character

Remedies must be applied to the diseased subject

of the community, is unsatisfactory. In such a community the question is not fairly tested, although even there, the indirect influence of the Bible may be seen in a higher tone and a purer life than could have been found where the Bible was wholly unknown.

Effects of an accepted Bible.

Taking those, therefore, by whom the Bible has been cordially accepted, what has been the result? It has been found a light to them that sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace. It has brought to them the balm of Gilead, and the Physician who is there. It has taught them songs of forgiveness and thanksgiving, through the grace of Him who died for them and who rose again. It has given them a home, and a Father, a character, a life, and a hope. It has made the drunkard sober, the scoffer devout, the miser generous, the timid brave, the selfish self-denying. It has furnished the young with noble plans of life, and noble principles to guide them through it, and it has given them strength and decision to stand to their colours. It has furnished the afflicted with comfort in every sorrow, kept hope burning in the deepest gloom, and taught them to hurl defiance at the last enemy,—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Its influence on the persecuted.

It has nerved men, and women too, with wonderful strength to do and to suffer. It has made

poor, weak, quivering flesh equal to the tortures of the Inquisition, equal to the dreary dungeon, and the stake, and the gallows, and the wheel, and the red-hot pincers, and the flaying knife, and I know not what other instruments of cruelty. Grander still, it has inspired them with a marvellous love for their fellows, and with a fervent sympathy with Jesus in His grand enterprise to seek and to save the lost. It has turned the delicate lady into the laborious nurse who toils day and night to soothe the sorrows and heal the diseases of the sick; it has sent the accomplished scholar to the haunts of savages, to try to win them to the blessed life, no matter though in return the tomahawk may shatter his skull, or the poisoned arrow pierce his bosom. It has given power to the Christian explorer to bury himself for long and weary years among degraded tribes, and while dreaming sadly of his children far away, or dreaming of luxurious feasts during the gnawings of hunger, to work on resolutely by a fixed plan of persevering love, in spite of pain and weariness, and peril, and opposition, and disappointment, and harrowing scenes that make him fancy he is living in hell.[1]

Triumphs of its spirit of ministering.

But not to dwell on extraordinary cases, the effect of the Bible on individuals, and these numberless as the sand, is, that through it they are brought into fellowship with God—God in

[1] See Livingstone's Last Journals, II., 135.

Christ; they have been restored to their lost place in the great divine orbit, and have recovered that holy communion from which sin had driven them. Words cannot express what it is to have gained a God, and to be living in loving fellowship with Him. To have God as a Father and a Friend, forgiving all our iniquities, healing all our diseases, guiding our perplexities, soothing our sorrows, and sanctifying our mercies; and to know that these are but the first-fruits, and that God will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for evermore,—is surely the most heavenly experience that man can have in this world. If the Bible in all ages has been the instrument of this experience, it may well be called "the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever."

Fellowship with God restored.

But beyond the effects of the Bible on the individual, let us glance at its effects on society, wherever a sufficient number of persons have yielded themselves to it to give a tone to the whole community. It can hardly be denied that it has proved the most powerful agent of civilization the world has ever known. We have but to look at what takes place in Fiji, or Madagascar, or the New Hebrides, or Lovedale or Livingstonia, when the Bible becomes a living power. Who is there, who, if told that some community of cannibals had taken to the Bible, that they were listening in crowds to its message, that they were

Effects on society.

Civilization of barbarians.

fervently singing its psalms and hymns, and that their children had learnt to revere the name of Jesus—who would not expect with the firmest assurance to hear next that they were abandoning their ferocious habits, building houses, clothing themselves with decent apparel, cultivating their fields, beginning to trade, enacting righteous laws, and observing the rules of truth and righteousness? And as the ages rolled on, should we not reckon with absolute certainty that among these nations, as in older countries, the Bible would continue to exert its influence and to elevate the community still further?

Probable effects of abolishing Bible.

But if you should burn the Bible and abolish it for ever, what would be the prospects of the world as to order and real progress? What sceptic who thinks of the passions that lie in the human breast, of the fearful height to which these passions may rise, of the schemes of nihilism and socialism, of the societies for vengeance and assassination, of daggers and revolvers, nitroglycerine and dynamite, and the readiness of reckless men for their nefarious ends, to plunge society into chaos could look forward without misgiving to a state of things in which neither Bible nor Saviour, law nor gospel, should have the slightest influence, or be so much as known? On the other hand, there is hardly a Christian man or woman whose hope for the world in future ages is not bound up with the fate of

the Bible. His ground would be the same, alike for despair if the Bible should perish, and for hope if the Bible should be sustained; inasmuch as all experience shows that its influence extends alike to the life that now is, and to that which is to come. Even on this lower ground, as an instrument of temporal benefit, its vitality never fails: it is "the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever."

IV.

Difficulties in the Bible.

But are there not difficulties in the Bible? Are there not passages which it is hard to reconcile with our highest ideas of the character of God? Is He not sometimes introduced as requiring things to be done which is hard to believe that He could have done? Are not men and women sometimes commended for acts which we cannot read of without a shudder? Is there nothing in the Bible to hurt the sense of modesty, the instinct of purity? If it be the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever, why should it contain a single statement or a single word fitted to raise a doubt whether it has really come from Him?

The fact admitted.

Let us frankly admit that there are difficulties in the Bible. In fact there are difficulties in connection with all God's works. There are difficulties in nature, raising doubts in some minds whether it is really the product of an infinitely benevolent

There are also difficulties in nature,

Creator. We have storms, volcanoes, earthquakes poisonous winds, destructive floods, and deadly malaria. We have famine and pestilence, we have animals devouring each other, we have ferocious monsters of the deep and of the land, a terror to all who are near them. There are great difficulties in providence—in the moral government of God. Why did God permit sin to enter His world, and spread desolation and misery on every side? Why are the wicked often so prosperous, why is the just man so often trodden down, why is the godly man so often persecuted? Why did not God protect His fair creation, natural and moral, from being invaded and desolated by such agencies of disorder and death? "My ways are not your ways, neither are your thoughts My thoughts, saith the Lord." There are so many ways in which God follows a different course from what we should have expected, that we cannot wonder that we find apparent anomalies in His Word. The wonder in fact would be if there were no such anomalies. An analogy runs through all God's works; and that analogy would have failed us if we had met with difficulties in nature, difficulties, yes, tremendous difficulties in providence, and no difficulties whatever in the Word.

And in Providence.

Analogy leads us to expect them in Bible.

Let us remember, too, that while the whole Bible is the record of God's revelation, it is a revelation made in a peculiar way. It was a

gradual revelation, beginning dimly, and shining more and more unto the perfect day. It was an *educating* revelation, for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; and the faculty of spiritual discernment had to be imparted and enlarged, had to be made gradually capable of more and more clear apprehension, not only to individuals, but to the race itself, from age to age. In the record of this revelation, moreover, in addition to the unchangeable divine truth which is its essence, we often find the reflection of man's imperfect apprehension of that truth, and imperfect moral and spiritual application of it. We find the unchangeable truth of God so often presented in immediate connection with man's imperfect apprehension of it, that what really belongs to man may at times appear as if it belonged to God.

The peculiar manner of the revelation.

The difficulty in respect of such things would be much greater if it occurred in connection with the closing portions of the revelation. But the case is quite different. The moral difficulties of revelation are connected with the Old Testament, and chiefly with the earlier parts of the Old Testament, when the complications to which we have referred were in full force, and the difficulty of separating what is purely divine from man's way of apprehending it is by far the greatest. With the closing portion of the book, there is no such difficulty. A spiritual and moral level has been reached, the highest ever

The difficulties mostly at the beginning—the end clear.

known or conceived by man. The character of Jesus Christ presents the most complete ideal of excellence that has ever been imagined. The moral tone of the Gospels and the Epistles is so pure as to constitute one of the chief arguments for the divinity of the Christian religion. In the earlier parts of the Bible we seem to see the sun struggling through clouds sometimes so dense as to hide him from our view. In the Gospels and the Epistles the clouds have been scattered, the sun shines forth in all his splendour and in all his strength, and the earth, bright, warm, and fruitful, bears witness to his beneficent power.

Greater difficulties if Bible be rejected.

Another consideration is of great practical weight, in dealing with the moral difficulties of the Bible. In all cases where difficulties present themselves on one side of a question, it is useful to ask whether on the other side the difficulties are not equal, perhaps even greater. We have allowed that there are difficulties in connection with the position that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. But we affirm with the utmost confidence that there are far greater difficulties in connection with the position that it is merely the product of man. "The Bible," an old minister once remarked to his flock, "is a wonderful book, *if it be true*." The surprise of his people at the qualification was quickly removed when he added, "but it is ten times more wonderful *if it be not true*." To those who ponder the Bible

in all its aspects—its far-distant commencement, its unexampled chain of authorship, its unity of purpose, ever showing God drawing near to man in the way of grace, its prophetic announcements of Christ, its glorious portrait of the great Mediator, its scheme of grace, its sanctifying efficacy – it is simply inconceivable that such a book should have been the product of mere human reason. Whoever ponders the main contents and features of the book and drinks in its great message feels that there is such a surpassing glory about it that any difficulties there may be in some parts of it do not affect him —these parts are, as it were, transfigured through their neighbourhood to the rest. In a great chandelier of a thousand lights, a few dark jets are nothing, they are swallowed up in the blaze. If the body be well clad on a winter day, the naked face suffers no inconvenience, it receives its heat from the protected body. We know that here we see through a glass darkly, and are ignorant of much of the ways of God. All that the loyal heart needs is such evidence that as a whole, the Bible is the Word of God, as to lead it to wait with patience for light on the difficulties it cannot resolve. There is such power, as it were, in the leading nerves and arteries, that local numbness here and there makes no difference to the vitality of the whole frame.

The Bible impossible if no Divine agency in it.

The surpassing glory of the whole.

V.

The whole vitality not in the book itself.

But does the whole vitality that we have spoken of reside in the book itself? Is there a sort of charm in it, so that it cannot but influence men for good? If such were our doctrine we might justly be called bibliolators—worshippers of a book. If one were to extol the wires along which the electric fluid runs as the source of all they convey, one would be laying one's self open to a charge of ignorance and folly. If, in like manner, we were to ascribe to the Bible as a book all its power over man's spirit, we should be laying ourselves open to a similar charge. No doubt the Bible, even as a book, has far more moral power than any other book. There is a measure of moral power in the maxims of Seneca, in the precepts of Confucius, and in the requirements of Buddha; so also there is moral power in the very contents of the Bible. But it is not our doctrine that it is here that the *great* strength of the Bible lies. We maintain further, that the Bible is the medium through which the Holy Ghost works in the soul of man, enlightening, renewing, and transforming it. In this point of view, the Bible is like the electric wire, and its great power is derived from the fact that it is the channel of a Divine agent. Being the product of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

It is the medium of the Holy Ghost.

the Bible from the first has been adapted to His use. It is when used by Him that it becomes "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness." It is called "The sword of the Spirit." As His weapon, His instrument, it does its greatest work. If we would know the Word in its highest efficacy, we must depend on the Spirit's power. There is all the difference between the Bible in itself, and the Bible as the instrument of the Spirit, that there was between the strength of Samson with his locks shorn, and the same Samson before the scissors or razor came upon his head.

The word wielded by the Spirit, God's great means of good.

Neglecting this, we fall into fatal errors, and great evils result. The word quickened by the Spirit is God's great power for the regeneration of the world. Through this agency the greatest strongholds fall, as did the walls of Jericho. Through the Word read and preached, God has provided for the reclamation of the darkest moral wastes, for turning the wilderness into a fruitful field and for giving the glory of Carmel and the excellency of Sharon to regions cursed with spiritual death and desolation. Going forth with this weapon against giants, many a David has achieved victories that seemed unreasonable and impossible. Cannibal islands have come to resound with the melody of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; idols have been cast to the bats and to the moles; before this

Zerubbabel great mountains have become plains, and the walls of Jerusalem have been built up even in troublous times.

Other expedients unsuccessful.

But it has often happened that men, anxious to do good, have failed to see how the Bible can exert more than its natural power as a book over the hearts and lives of men. Believing this to be insufficient for the great moral warfare that has to be waged, they have looked about them for more likely artillery,—for ways of influencing the heart more apparently adapted to the end. One very common device has been to make great use of the senses in conveying spiritual truth. Such things as music, architecture, pictures, and religious rites that appeal to the senses, have been thought much more likely to attract the thoughtless and impress the careless than the contents of a serious book. But still it remains true, as in the days of the Apostles, that men are born again through the Word of God that liveth for ever; that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation; and that it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Want of confidence in the Divine method of "Word and Spirit" leads to devices that promise much but perform little. The more trust we repose in the Word as the channel, and the Holy Spirit as the power, the more glorious are the results sure to follow. This holds true alike of our private reading

We should trust in "Word and Spirit."

of the Bible, and of the use that is made of it in public. A Biblical Christian is the best furnished of all Christians, and a Biblical pulpit is the most powerful of all pulpits. But in either case the power of the Spirit is the energizing force that makes the word effectual; and the words of the apostle are as applicable to this as to any other form of spiritual labour,—"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

VI.

Other elements of vitality.

We have confined ourselves in this Tract to the chief elements of the vitality of the Bible. We have dwelt on its chief element of unity,—its view from first to last of God drawing near to men in the way of grace, encouraging them to hope in His mercy through a Mediator, We have seen Him carrying forward His scheme from age to age, till at last, in the end of the Apocalypse, the gulf which opened between them at the beginning of Genesis is completely bridged over, and a voice is heard proclaiming, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and shall be their God." It is hardly possible, in a closing sentence, even to glance at other elements of unity, or other features of vitality in the Scriptures. We may simply

The sound practical teaching of Scripture.

notice how, all through, the two great elements of practical goodness, duty to God and duty to man, go hand in hand together; how the service of God constantly includes all moral duty, all faithfulness in the social relations of men, so that you never find religion viewed as a separate concern that may be duly attended to, even when other duties are neglected; how uniform is the view presented in Scripture of the awfulness of sin, its deadly virus, and its awful doom when the day of retribution comes at last; how constant is the encouragement to man to seek communion with God; what a lofty place prayer holds alike in the Old Testament and the New; and how beautiful the Bible pictures are of the intercourse of redeemed man with God, whether seen in the converse of Moses on the Mount, or David in his psalms, or the beloved disciple leaning on his Master's bosom.

The hopeful spirit of the Bible.

Let us mention but one other feature—the *hopeful spirit* that pervades the whole Bible. The Old Testament was full of hope in the prospect of the first coming of Christ; the New Testament is full of hope in the prospect of the second. Admitting while the Bible does that earth is labouring under a frightful disorder, it looks forward with serene confidence to a time when all tokens of the disorder shall be removed. Not certainly wholly remedied, in the sense of all men being saved,

No absolute restoration.

for there is neither concealment nor ambiguity as to the fact that a portion of mankind will be lost. This is the solemn and mysterious truth which is never allowed in the Bible to pass from our view. But in other respects, the winding up of the world's history, or rather of the church's history, exemplifies the tendency of Scripture to carry on our minds to bright conclusions. We are encouraged to think much of God's power of bringing good out of evil. Our individual troubles have their solace; and on a large scale all things work together for our good. The power of the Bible to cheer the afflicted is one of its chiefest glories. It is the Bible only that can assure us that "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

But a glorious issue of good out of evil.

EVIDENTIAL CONCLUSIONS

FROM THE

FOUR GREATER EPISTLES

OF

ST. PAUL

BY THE

VERY REV. J. S. HOWSON, D.D.

Argument of the Tract.

THE concession of Baur, Renan, and others, respecting the authenticity of these four Epistles taken as the starting-point of the argument. Nothing is assumed regarding the authority of other parts of the New Testament.

I. In these four Epistles we have CHRISTIANITY AS A SYSTEM, including facts, doctrines, and institutions; (1) *Facts*: the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ; importance of noting the manner in which these two subjects are mentioned; (2) *Doctrines:* the conspicuous position assigned to faith; the doctrine of redemption; instruction regarding the Holy Ghost. (3) *Institutions:* Baptism; the Supper of the Lord; the Christian Ministry; the observance of Sunday. All this tends to bind naturally together these Epistles with the rest of the New Testament. (4) A similar conclusion drawn from the mention of *Persons:* St. Peter in these Epistles and in other parts of Scripture; value of the general confidence inspired by the Christianity of these Four Epistles.

II. In these Epistles we have ST. PAUL'S PERSONALITY. Strong characteristics of his personality here and in other parts of the New Testament. (1) Claim of an *independent and direct call to the apostleship.* This is consistent with what we read elsewhere. (2) His own testimony here to his former *persecution of the Christians.* (3) Unity of St. Paul's character; his *unwearied* energy. (4) His *quick sympathy* and *tact;* varied illustrations of this feature. Thus again these four accepted Epistles are seen bound by a strong chain with St. Paul's other Epistles, and with the Acts of the Apostles.

III. MINUTE, YET INDEPENDENT, HARMONY OF THESE EPISTLES WITH DETAILS IN THE BOOK OF THE ACTS. (1) St. Paul's habit of *working with his own hands.* This fact appears both in these letters and elsewhere; moral lessons drawn here and elsewhere from this habit. (2) Notices of *Aquila* and *Priscilla;* these notices are consistent everywhere, yet without any suspicion of contrivance. (3) The *collection for the poor Christians in Judæa;* illustration thus furnished of St. Paul's habit of philanthropy. (4) Evidence supplied by the mention of *places;* example, in that of *Damascus*, as named in two of these Epistles; strict harmony of this with what we find in two of St. Paul's speeches. This kind of argument would tell forcibly in a court of justice. It does not put in jeopardy any other part of Christian Evidence.

EVIDENTIAL CONCLUSIONS

FROM THE FOUR GREATER EPISTLES

OF

ST. PAUL.

In the wide waste of waters which modern criticism believes itself to have spread over the firm and fruitful ground of Divine Revelation there stands an island, the solid foundation and clear surface of which are not questioned. This is the portion of the New Testament which consists of the Epistles written to *the Corinthians*, *the Galatians*, and *the Romans*. These documents are viewed by the most advanced of the critics as authentic, and as having been really written by St. Paul in the course of his third missionary journey. The words of M. Renan may be taken as sufficing to justify the assertion of this fact. He speaks of these four Epistles as "incontestables et incontestées" (indisputable and undisputed); and he adds, "les critiques les plus sevères, tels que Christien Baur, les acceptent sans objection."[1] (The most severe critics, such as Christian Baur, accept them without

The four Epistles unquestioned by criticism

Renan's testimony.

[1] *Saint Paul*, pp. v., vi.

objection.) It is from this concession, as its starting-point, that the following short course of reasoning proceeds.

The purpose of this Tract.

I propose, in these few pages, simply to take this conceded fact, coupling it with another fact which cannot be denied—namely, that a Book called the Acts of the Apostles exists, as well as the four Gospels and the other Epistles—and to suggest some conclusions which seem to me to be easily and naturally reached from this point of departure. I take into my hand these four unquestioned Epistles, and I place beside them the Book of the Acts, without assuming anything as to its date or the circumstances of its first appearance. I shall merely submit certain parts of it to critical internal examination as I proceed. So with other parts of the New Testament, the Gospels and the remainder of the Epistles. They, to some extent, will be dealt with in the same manner. But, as will be seen, there are special reasons, in this case, for careful attention to the Acts of the Apostles.

I.

Christianity as a system found in the undisputed Epistles.

Now, in the first place, we have in these four Epistles *Christianity as a system*. If all the rest of the New Testament were vanished and gone, still we should have this fact to deal with; and it is a difficult fact to deal with, except on the sup-

position that Christianity is a revelation from Heaven.

Can only be accounted for as a Divine revelation.

The best way to justify this statement is to read through the four Epistles under consideration, with this thought in the mind; and this I have done, so as to have the case fresh and correct before me. I have tried to feel as if it were a new subject. It is not a bad exercise, even for a firmly-believing Christian. To one who does not believe, this simple task may be recommended as worthy of an experiment.

What is included in Christianity as a system.

In speaking of Christianity as a system I include, of course, facts, doctrines, and institutions; and these three sides of the subject may be taken in turn. It may not be easy to draw lines of absolute separation among them. Christian doctrines are implied in Christian institutions; and there must be ascertained facts to give value to both. But for the purposes of the present argument it is enough to draw the distinction approximately; and we may consider facts, doctrines, and institutions separately.

The facts implied in these Epistles.

1. As to *facts* implied in these Epistles there is no doubt that they point, in the most remarkable manner, to JESUS CHRIST, and centre there. Such a person as JESUS CHRIST must have existed; and within very near limits of time before the writing of these letters: and if we have an account of Him which seems to fit all the references to Him con-

tained in these documents, such an account at least demands an instant and most careful attention. The letters are so remarkable and surprising, that the interest they excite immediately communicates an interest to what seems to be collateral and explanatory. They require an evangelical background; and the evangelical background which we possess exactly meets the case. Why is it not to be accepted?

Among minor facts, the following are worthy of attention. In the Epistle to the Romans it is said that Jesus Christ was "made of the seed of David."[1] This is a fact upon which some considerable stress is laid in the Gospels, as also in the Acts.[2] In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians it is said that He was "poor";[3] and this fact too is very prominent in the Evangelic history.[4] Nor is it credible that these representations of Christ in that history—that He was a descendant of David, and that He lived a life of poverty—can have been introduced there, in the midst of a tissue of varied incidents, in order to produce a correspondence with the four documents before us. The mention of the reading of the Mosaic Scriptures in the synagogues, which we find in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,[5] is

The Davidic origin of Christ.

His poverty.

The reading of Moses in the synagogue.

[1] Rom. i. 3.

[2] Matt. xii. 23; John vii. 42; Acts ii. 30; xiii. 23. See 2 Tim. ii. 8.

[3] 2 Cor. viii. 9. [4] Matt. viii. 20. [5] 2 Cor. iii. 15.

not without its value for this argument, when we compare it with the actual notices of such reading of the Old Testament, in the lives of Jesus and His Apostles,[1] and with what James is recorded to have said at the Apostolic Council: "Moses hath of old time them that preach Him, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath day."[2] This very person James might be used as a link of connection incidentally (and therefore persuasively) furnished between the Epistle to the Galatians on the one side, and the Gospels and Acts on the other. In the Epistle he appears in companionship with Peter and John, as a "pillar" of the Church conjointly with them;[3] and the Gospels place him with them in the catalogue of chosen Apostles.[4] This scene too is at Jerusalem, the place where the Acts represent him as occupying a prominent local responsibility.[5]

James.

But especially we must mark those two great facts concerning Christ—His *Crucifixion* and His *Resurrection*—and the manner of the appearance of these facts in the Epistles under our attention. As to these two literal occurrences, "the preaching of the cross"[6] had been St. Paul's main point at Corinth. He goes so far as to say that he had "determined to know nothing among the

The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ

[1] Luke iv. 16, 17; Acts xvii. 1–3.
[2] Acts xv. 21.
[3] Gal. ii. 9.
[4] Matt. x. 2.
[5] Acts xv. 13.
[6] 1 Cor. i. 18.

Corinthians, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."[1] So, in regard to Galatia, his appeal to his converts there is, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"[2] Nor ought we to omit the mention of a point of detail, which appears quite incidentally in one of these letters. It is noted that Christ was crucified by "the princes of this world,"[3] a circumstance which exactly describes the action of Pontius Pilate, as the representative of the Roman Power, while yet it is as remote as possible from any semblance of imitation in the construction of the Gospel. And as with the Crucifixion, so with the co-ordinate fact of the Resurrection. If it is "Christ that died," who is the great subject of St. Paul's teaching, it is "rather," as he says in the Epistle to the Romans, "Christ that is risen again."[4] It is especially in the First Epistle to the Corinthians that the Resurrection of Christ is asserted, with extreme force, as a literal occurrence. The fact had been denied at Corinth, and the refutation of this denial supplies to us at once a link of great value with the Gospel history.[5]

Christ crucified by the princes of this world.

The testimony of the First Epistle to the Corinthians to the resurrection.

It is not necessary here to give minute attention to the reconciliation of the instances of Christ's

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 2. [2] Gal. iii. 1. [3] 1 Cor. ii. 8.
[4] Rom. viii. 34. [5] 1 Cor. xv. 3-8, 15.

appearances after the Resurrection, with the instances given in the Gospels and the Acts. My point is simply this, that it is Christ as risen from the dead who is the subject of St. Paul's teaching in these Epistles, just as it is Christ as risen from the dead who concludes the Evangelic histories. The doctrinal and moral uses to which these great facts—the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are applied—belong rather to the next paragraph than to this; yet they may just be mentioned here. In such passages as the following: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts:" "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" "If we be dead with Christ we shall also live with Him:" "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord:" "Though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God; for we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you"[1]—the very allegorical use of the facts shows how deeply the facts had penetrated into the innermost convictions of the writer,—while, to view the matter on another side, such passages are in entire harmony with the same writer's language in the other Epistles attributed to him. Two instances only need be given: one where he

The doctrinal and moral uses of the crucifixion and resurrection.

[1] Gal. v. 24; ii. 20; Rom. vi. 8; vi. 11; 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

says to the Philippians that he earnestly desires "that he may know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death"[1]—the other, where he says to the Colossians, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."[2]

The doctrines contained in the Epistles.

2. As to the *doctrines* which attract our attention in these four Epistles, there is no doubt that they present Christianity to us, under certain aspects as a very remarkable religion. And first we note the extraordinary importance assigned in it to *faith*. A broad statement of the case is the following: "In the Gospel of Christ is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."[3] A still stronger statement is the following: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;"[4] and the same doctrine is equally conspicuous elsewhere within the narrow range of the documents before us: "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.—Ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.—We through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."[5] This presentation of a new religious system is certainly, as has been said,

The importance assigned to faith.

[1] Phil. iii. 10. [2] Col. iii. 1. [3] Rom. i. 17.
[4] Rom. iv. 5. [5] Gal. iii. 9, 26; v. 5.

remarkable; and this is to be observed, that it is in strict harmony with the place assigned to faith in Christ's own teaching, and in the account of His miracles, as given to us in the Gospels. The sayings of our Lord to the Syro-Phœnician suppliant, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt;"[1] and to another who approached Him, "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole;"[2] to the disciples, "If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it shall be done; and all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;"[3] and again, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them,"[4]—these sayings are quite as strong as anything of the kind which we find in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians; and in character and meaning they are very similar to the passages which have been quoted from these Epistles. The same argument might be presented in another form in connection with the subject of justification, and what St. Paul writes concerning it in these Epistles might be set side by side with what he is alleged to have said concerning it to the Jews at the Pisidian Antioch: "By Christ all that believe are justi-

In harmony with Christ's own teachings.

The Syro-Phœnician woman.

Promises to the disciples.

Faith and justification.

[1] Matt. xv. 28.
[2] Matt. ix. 22.
[3] Matt. xxi. 22.
[4] Mark xi. 24.

fied from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."[1] But, to turn to another doctrine, which likewise is very prominent in these four Epistles, and which might be expressed in one word as the doctrine of

Redemption.

redemption, St. Paul says, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, that Christ, while placed toward us in other spiritual relations also, is "made unto us redemption."[2] In the same Epistle he says more pointedly, and more than once, that we are "bought with a price."[3] In the Epistle to the Galatians he says that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world;" and that He "redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us."[4] These are most remarkable phrases; but they correspond in doctrine with what we find in other parts of the New Testament—notably in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the First Epistle of St. John, and in the Book of Revelation. And if one more instance is to be adduced for the sake of giving something like completeness to the representation of the characteristic doctrine of these four Epistles, it might be what it taught there

The power of the Holy Ghost.

concerning *the power of the Holy Ghost*. In this "sending down of the Holy Ghost from heaven"[5]

[1] Acts xiii. 39. [2] 1 Cor. i. 30. [3] *Ibid.* vi. 20; vii. 23.
[4] Gal. iii. 13. [5] 1 Peter i. 12.

we have in truth both a fact and a doctrine. In the Gospels this sending is exhibited as the most conspicuous promise of the Saviour; in the early part of the Acts the first fulfilment of the promise is recorded; and such passages as those which we find in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and the fifth of that to the Galatians, are such as might be expected from such a root and such a flower.

Institutions.

3. But Christianity, besides the facts on which it rests, and besides the doctrines which it teaches, has *institutions* which it prescribes, and by which it is continuously supported. Primarily, of course, we must have reference here to the two Sacraments—to Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Their definite appointment in the Gospel-time, and their observance, as a matter of course, in the early Apostolic time, need only be stated. These facts lie on the surface of the two great historic parts of the New Testament. But the observance and high spiritual meaning of these two ceremonies lie embedded in these four Epistles, which form the occasion of the present argument, so that the harmony between the epistolary and narrative exhibitions of Christianity in this respect, is complete, while yet it is quite natural and unaffected. In the Epistle to the Romans we read, "Know ye not that so many of us

The Sacraments.

Spiritual significance of baptism.

as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death: therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death."[1] In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we read, "Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"[2] and again, "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."[3] In the Epistle to the Galatians we read, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."[4] And if an allegorical application, as some may deem it, is in certain of such passages made of the act of Baptism, this rather enhances the value of the connection which we are tracing, for we see here a living religion rising high above mere ceremony. The notices of the other sacrament are less diffused through this group of Epistles; in fact, they are concentrated in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. But they are there concentrated with so much force, that they are riveted, so to speak, upon the Gospel-history. In the literal account that is given of the founding of the Lord's Supper there is so much resemblance to the account supplied in the Gospel according to St. Luke,[5] that it is very difficult not to believe that there was some personal communication on this subject between these two writers. And the indications of such a personal com-

The Lord's Supper.

St. Luke's and St. Paul's accounts of the institution of it.

[1] Rom. vi. 3. [2] 1 Cor. i. 13. [3] 1 Cor. xii. 13.
[4] Gal. iii. 27. [5] Luke xxii. 17–21.

munication are in themselves manifestly of some evidential value. And here again, as in the case of the other great Christian ordinance, if we find a great religious principle associated with it, as in such words as "we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of one bread,"[1] this binds together for us the literal founding of Christianity described to us in one part of Scripture, with the reality of a living religion, as exhibited to us in another part.

The religious principle associated with it.

As to the existence of appointed ministrations in the Church which these letters depict, it is remarkable that the most definite phraseology on the subject relates to the ministry of women. Phœbe is named as a "deacon" of the Church at Cenchrea.[2] In fact, she is the only person in the New Testament whose name is associated with this title.[3] It is, however, worth noticing, as a curious coincidence, that this tallies very well with the philanthropic aspect of the origin of the Christian Ministry, as exhibited in the Acts.[4] But

Ministry in the Church.

[1] 1 Cor. x. 17 [2] Rom. xvi. 1.

[3] Stephen and his six companions (Acts vi. 5) are not called Deacons; and the Deacons of Phil. i. 1 and 1 Tim. (iii. 8–13) are merely mentioned in general terms. In 1 Tim iii. 11, the Revised Version gives the correct meaning, and shows that women-deacons or deaconesses are intended.

[4] The necessities of philanthropy (Acts vi. 1) give the occasion to the diaconate of Stephen and the others; and it is in connection with philanthropy (Acts xi. 30) that the presbyters of the Christian Church are first mentioned.

as to the existence of a stated ministry in the Church, the broad general principle enunciated in the First Epistle to the Corinthians is decisive: "Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the Temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord also ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."[1] This, by the hypothesis, belongs to a comparatively early period of St. Paul's apostolic life; and if it is somewhat general, whereas, at a later period of that life, in the Epistle to the Philippians,[2] and, later still, in the Pastoral Epistles,[3] this subject appears in a more mature form,—in this, to say the least, there is no inconsistency. Again, in these four Epistles, as elsewhere, the corporate life of the Church, the exercise of discipline, the assembling together for public worship, are assumed. And, to end this slight notice of institutions, there is in one of these letters a naming of "the first day of the week," which reminds us of the same phrase in the Gospels and the Acts, and almost inevitably carries us on to the thought of the religious observance of Sunday.[4]

The corporate life and discipline of the Church.

Observance of Sunday.

4. Thus, tested by allusions to facts, by statements

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 14.

[2] Phil. i. 1. [3] 1 Tim. iii. 8–13.

[4] 1 Cor. xvi. 2. See Matt. xxviii. 1; Acts xx. 7.

of doctrine, and by the expressed or implied existence of institutions, does this small group of Epistles hold out a hand in one direction, so as intimately to grasp the Gospels; while with like intimacy they hold out another hand to grasp the remaining Epistles attributed to the same writer. But another part of the same connection ought at least just to be touched. This is the evidence supplied by reference to *persons*. If the Evangelical history is true, it was by living agents that the Gospel was to be spread through the world; and some of the living agents are named: and among them the most conspicuous is St. Peter. Now, references to Peter are found in the Epistles before us. If it were not so, there would be the appearance of a dissidence and wide separation between the Christianity of these Epistles and the Christianity of the Gospels and the Acts. But, as the case stands, this personal link of connection is quite real, while perfectly casual and incidental. In giving to the Galatians an account of his early Christian life, St. Paul, while asserting in the strongest way his independent apostleship, says that he eagerly desired to make Peter's acquaintance. "I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."[1] What could be more natural? How could it have been otherwise if St. Paul's experience had been what it is de-

References to persons.

St. Peter.

St. Paul's visit to him

[1] Gal. i. 18.

scribed to have been in the early part of the Acts, and if St. Peter had been what he is said in the Gospels to have been? And he supplies another very unexpected, yet very cogent, instance of affinity between this Epistle and the Gospel history Peter, with his old impulsiveness, fell into a sudden inconsistency, so as actually to imperil the true religious standing of many of his fellow-Christians, and so that a public expostulation and rebuke became necessary on the part of St. Paul.[1] That happened once more at Antioch, which had happened on the Sea of Tiberias[2] and in the house of the High Priest at Jerusalem.[3] Yet who could be so perverse as to say that there is here any ingenious invention of identity of character for the sake of procuring credit to documents not really authentic? As regards certain circumstances recorded in this Epistle as having happened at Jerusalem, the position of St. Peter in respect of them exactly corresponds with his position on the same occasion as narrated in the Acts, while yet with some incidental difficulties on the surface, which require explanation, and therefore prove independence of narration. And to add one other reference to the same disciple in this group of Epistles, we find that when party spirit ran high at Corinth, the head of one party was Paul, and the head of

Inconsistency of St Peter at Antioch.

Previous inconsistency on his part.

Party spirit at Corinth.

[1] Gal. ii. 11. [2] Matt. xiv. 30.
[3] Matt. xxvi. 69, 70.

another party was Peter.[1] This is just what might have been expected. The refutation of this party spirit is in the comprehensive assertion: "Whether it be Paul or Peter, all are yours."[2] But if Peter was what he is elsewhere recorded to have been, it is most natural that human passion and prejudice should have placed him in this position. And to end this section of the subject by referring to the statement which another part of the First Epistle to the Corinthians contains of an appearance to Peter after the Resurrection,[3] this exactly corresponds with what we read in the Gospel of St. Luke.[4] Probably it may be a reminiscence of those early conversations between St. Peter and St. Paul.

The appearance of the risen Saviour to St. Peter.

On the whole it seems very clear that when we hold firmly what we have in these four Epistles, we find that we have in our hands something very solid and strong, from which we can follow, link by link, chains which conduct us into other parts of the New Testament, with the conviction that all are connected together by consistency and mutual understanding,—that the same general character belongs to the whole, that, having confidence in these four Epistles, we must diffuse our confidence further. Having accepted our starting-point, we cannot stop there. We are in possession of more

Conclusion from the above argument.

[1] 1 Cor. i. 12.
[2] Gal. iii. 22.
[3] 1 Cor. xv. 5.
[4] Luke xxiv. 34.

—we are in possession of all—if we are in possession of this.

And there is another way of looking at the matter, not different from the former, but appealing with almost greater persuasiveness to our feelings and our conscience. Having in these Epistles Christianity fresh in view before us, as a divine religion, "we have confidence towards God."[1] We are sure that He will not deceive us. This religion is not merely a system of doctrines and institutions, with historic facts as its basis, and historic personages to propagate it, but it is a revelation of God's character. We follow on where He leads us through the other parts of the Gospel Scriptures. The inundation of doubt, which may have seemed to overspread some parts of them, tends to disappear. "The waters are dried up from off the earth: behold, the face of the ground is dry."[2]

Christianity a revelation of God's character.

II.

Another broad view of the subject before us is connected with *the personality of St. Paul.* In reading these four Epistles, even if we knew nothing of the documentary and historical environment from which we cannot separate them, we should be startled by the features of character

The personality of St. Paul.

[1] 1 John iii. 21. [2] Gen. viii. 13.

indicated in these four documents, and by the definite manner in which they set before our view a most extraordinary person. His enthusiasm, his aggressive missionary zeal, his devotion to that Master, real or imaginary, whom he has been led to serve, are palpable. And are we not justified in saying, parenthetically, that it is very difficult to conceive of such literal devotion to a Master whose claims are imaginary? Equally palpable, too, are the writer's strong sense, his vehement logic, and his alternation between tender sympathy and indignant expostulation. On the whole, it is a most complicated, yet most natural personality, which these letters force us to contemplate. And now let us observe that it is precisely the same character which comes to view on reading the other Epistles attributed to St. Paul, and the treatise which is called the Acts of the Apostles: and, at all events, those letters and this treatise exist. If the opinion which has hitherto been generally accepted is true, that the same man did write the other letters, and that the Book of the Acts is an honest, trustworthy document, then everything is easy, all the phenomena are explained. But then it is to be observed that this implies a diffusion of confidence in regard to these other books. If we accept what we find in these four Epistles, we are constrained to follow a conclusion which ranges over a much wider surface. But we

Most complicated and yet most natural

The same character appears alike in the Epistles and the Acts

must not be content with this general setting forth of the argument at this point. The topic before us deserves to be handled in detail.

St. Paul's calling to the apostleship.

1. In three of these selected Epistles, St. Paul lays the utmost stress upon his separate direct "*calling*" to the apostleship. In fact it is, in each of these three, his starting-point. In writing to the Romans he says that he was "called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God," that by Christ he has "received grace and apostleship;"[1] he begins his first letter to the Corinthians by saying that he is "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ;"[2] and in addressing the Galatians he is even more emphatic and exclusive in his language: he is an apostle "neither of men nor by man;" he neither "received the Gospel of man," nor was he so "taught" it, but "by the revelation of Jesus Christ."[3] If we believe him, we are face to face with a Divine communication. If not, we must doubt either his veracity or his sanity; and it seems very difficult to reconcile either doubt with the impression we derive from the reading of these four Epistles.

Direct from God.

Accounts of his conversion.

But the point immediately under consideration is this, that the assertion of a direct calling and revelation to himself personally is in strict and natural harmony with what we find in the Acts of the Apostles. Three times in that book is

[1] Rom. i. 1, 5. [2] 1 Cor. i. 1. [3] Gal. i. 1, 12.

his sudden conversion related with emphasis and in detail: and not only must our attention be given to the facts which are alleged to have taken place on the way to Damascus; but in the vision which Ananias is said to have seen in that city it is expressly said that Paul was "a chosen vessel" to bear Christ's name "before the Gentiles;"[1] while not at Damascus only, but at Jerusalem also, soon afterwards, in a vision of St. Paul himself, this direct calling was, according to his own account, reiterated. "Depart, for I will send thee far away to the Gentiles."[2] Thus a most momentous part of St. Paul's personal history is set before us in perfect harmony by these four Epistles, and by the historical narrative. And the same argument may be extended to other Epistles which bear the name of St. Paul. This consciousness of a direct personal call for work among the Gentiles is evident throughout these writings. Thus, in writing to the Ephesians of this Gospel with which he was commissioned, he says: "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power."[3]

Visions of Ananias and St. Paul.

St. Paul's consciousness of a direct personal call.

2. In writing to the Galatians St. Paul says: "Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I *per-*

His previous life.

[1] Acts ix. 15. [2] *Ibid.* xxii. 21.
[3] Eph. iii. 7.

secuted the church of God and wasted it."[1] And similar language, though arising out of a totally different context, is found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God: but by the grace of God I am what I am."[2] The same earnest, penitent, sorrowful remembrance of this part of his personal history is found elsewhere, outside the limits of his third group of four Epistles. Thus, in the letter to the Philippians, he says that, "as regards zeal" in Judaism, if a proof of that were wanting he had been "a persecutor of the church,"[3] while in another letter of a different date he recurs with the utmost depth of feeling to this part of his life: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."[4] We find precisely the same habit of reference to this subject in speeches given in the Acts of the Apostles. He says to the mob of Jews in the Temple Court, that "being zealous, as they all were that day," he says that he had "persecuted" the Christians "unto death," binding and delivering into prison not only men but "women;"[5] and he tells before Festus and Agrippa how he had "shut

Penitential reminiscences.

Gratitude for his call.

His speech to the Jews in the Temple Court.

[1] Gal. i. 13. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 9. [3] Phil. iii. 6.
[4] 1 Tim. i. 13. [5] Acts xxii. 19.

up many in prison;" how he "had compelled them to blaspheme;" how, "being exceedingly mad against them, he had persecuted them unto strange cities."[1] Nothing could be in closer correspondence with the language used in the Epistle to the Galatians; nor could anything be in closer correspondence with the facts of the case as recorded in the earlier part of the Book of the Acts. It is evidently the same personality of St. Paul which we meet in all these cases.

The same personality in the Acts and the Epistles.

3. This zealous, vehement, untiring persecution, in obedience to a misguided conscience, may in itself be viewed as indicating a part of *the personal character* of St. Paul: and, to pass now from facts of his experience to features of his temperament, we may first take one which is closely allied to what has just now been before us. This is *his unwearied energy and laborious activity.* That this was a feature of his character no one can doubt, who takes his impression from the four Epistles which are the groundwork of this inquiry. He is all eagerness to visit Rome.[2] After he has been there, he hopes to go to Spain. Meanwhile he is going on an important errand to Jerusalem. "All round about unto Illyricum he has fully preached the Gospel of Christ."[3] His impatient eagerness at Troas, when Titus failed to come to him with news from Macedonia, is evidently

St. Paul's energy and activity.

His impatient eagerness.

[1] Acts xxvi. 11. [2] Rom. i. 11; xv. 32. [3] *Ibid.* xv. 19.

characteristic.[1] The manner in which he speaks of having been detained by illness in Galatia seems to express the same kind of feeling.[2] The astonishing account of his labours in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians[3] bears upon it all the marks of truth, so that he is fully justified in the statement he makes in the First Epistle, that "he laboured more abundantly than they all;"[4] adding, however, (and the addition carries with it a world of evidence as to the reality of the Gospel which he bore,) "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

His abundant labours.

Now put side by side with this the impression we derive, as to this particular point, from the Acts of the Apostles; and is it not quite evident that we have the same man before us? His incessant travelling from place to place, his vehement labour wherever he stayed, are in exact harmony with the statement in the second letter to the Corinthians, though it is quite evident that that passage was not at all in the historian's thoughts when he wrote the treatise. No reference is made here to correspondence of persons, places, and circumstances—a subject which belongs to a later part of the argument—but rather to indications of a certain tone of mind.

His incessant journeyings.

[1] 2 Cor. ii. 13.

[2] Gal. iv. 13. "*Because of* infirmity" is the correct translation.

[3] 2 Cor. xi. 23–28. [4] 1 Cor. xv. 10.

"*Immediately*," he says, on recounting what took place at Damascus, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."[1] So, on another occasion, when summoned by a Divine communication to go into Europe: "*Immediately* we endeavoured to go into Macedonia."[2] So, again, on arriving in Rome, whatever the fatigues of the voyage and journey had been, whatever his infirmity of health, we find him "after three days" calling the Jews together that he might argue with them on behalf of the Gospel.[3] His rising up from a state of insensibility at Lystra, after stoning, and proceeding "the next day" to Derbe, bespeak alacrity and courage;[4] while the same impatience, demanding some strong discipline, which we have observed in the Epistles, seems evident in what we read concerning the approach to the Ægean from the interior: "when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not: and they passing by Mysia came down to Troas."[5] That the same energetic, active, laborious character is presented to us throughout the range of the Epistles, which besides these four, are attributed to St. Paul, will

His alacrity and courage.

The same character appears in all the Epistles.

[1] Acts xxvi. 19.

[2] *Ibid.* xvi. 10.

[3] Acts xxviii. 17.

[4] *Ibid.* xiv. 20.

[5] Acts xvi. 6-8.

hardly be denied.[1] We might sum up the whole case of agreement by a phrase which he uses alike in his speech to the Ephesian elders, and in his two letters to the Thessalonians, when he speaks of his labours of various kinds as continued "*night and day.*"[2]

4. We may now pass from St. Paul's unwearied industry, to *his quick sympathy, his tenderness, his tact.* The very contrast has in it an element of persuasiveness. It is in the combination of two very opposite qualities that we recognize especially the personality of St. Paul. His tact is visible in his praising the Corinthians before he blames them: his sympathy in the deep feeling with which he welcomes the offender on his repentance.[3] But the sympathetic nature of the Apostle is made manifest in other ways, and in ways which, because less direct, are the more important for our purpose. He craves for the sympathy of others. Thus put together what he says of the "temptation" in his flesh, when writing to the Galatians, and of the "thorn in the flesh" when writing to the Corinthians.[4] There is no doubt that these two expressions refer to the same subject; and in each case he so names it as to

His tact.

His sympathetic nature.

His craving for sympathy.

[1] Niemeyer says truly, in his *Charakeristik der Bibel* (I. p. 215), "Paulus ist überall der geschäftigarbeitende Mann."

[2] 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8.

[3] 2 Cor. ii. 6–8. [4] 2 Cor. xii. 7; Gal. iv. 14.

make a demand on the considerate care and feeling of those to whom he writes. The same habit of character, if such an expression may be allowed, is evident near the end of the Epistle to the Romans. He is about to go to Jerusalem with alms carefully collected in various places for the poor Christians in Judæa; but his heart is full of fear. "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."[1] It is the more important to dwell carefully on this passage, because we can connect it, by manifest signs of identity of feeling, with that part of the historic narrative to which other circumstances show that it belongs. There is a most evident shade of melancholy upon this part of St. Paul's biography, as we trace him on his return voyage from Corinth, whence he wrote this Epistle, to Jerusalem, where he was arrested by the Roman soldiers. At Miletus he has the sad foreboding of "bonds and afflictions;"[2] the sorrowful feeling and deep craving for sympathy with which he addresses there the Ephesian

His fears.

His melancholy.

His forebodings.

[1] Rom. xv. 30-32. [2] Acts xx. 23.

elders cannot be mistaken. And our impression of the scene is deepened as we read of what took place at the close of it. "When he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all: and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that he should see their face no more"[1] From Ephesus the vessel went to Tyre; and there a description of a similar scene is given. They all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down and prayed. "And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again."[2] Thence they went to Ptolemais, and next day to Cæsarea, where he is again warned of impending danger, and the disciples do their best to hinder him from going to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased," writes St. Luke, "saying, The will of the Lord be done."[3] All this should be carefully put side by side with the passage quoted above from the Epistle to the Romans: for it combines with it in elucidating one side of St. Paul's character.

His parting with the Ephesian elders.

His perseverance at all hazards.

[1] Acts xx. 36–38.

[2] Acts xxi. 5, 6. [3] *Ibid.* xxi. 13, 14.

There is strict correspondence: yet evidently no imitation. It is the same side of character as that which is shown in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. "I wrote to you with many tears—Ye are in our hearts to live and die with you."[1] And yet it is perhaps in personal friendship and in small particulars that sympathy makes itself most evident. In the last-named Epistle St. Paul's personal feeling towards Titus is very similar to his personal feeling towards Epaphroditus, as manifested in the letter to the Philippians.[2] And, to conclude what is brought forward under this head, the whole tone of that Epistle, as also of the Epistle to the Galatians, receives an illustration from two sentences in the narrative of the Acts, which are seen to be full of meaning when looked at in this connection. The first is at the moment of leaving the Syrian coast: "The next day we touched at Sidon: and Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself."[3] The second is on the high road in Italy, when the prisoners were approaching Rome: "The brethren came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns, whom, when

Correspondence without imitation between the Acts and Romans.

Personal friendships of St. Paul.

[1] 2 Cor. ii. 4; vii. 3. This point is summed up, with great force and beauty, by Adolphe Monod, in a sermon entitled "Les Larmes de Saint Paul," in his *Saint Paul*. I may perhaps also be allowed here to refer to the *Hulsean Lectures* for 1860 (third edition).

[2] 2 Cor. ii. 13.

[3] Acts xxvii. 3.

Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."[1] In order to see all that is reflected, on these two occasions, in the language of St. Luke, "the beloved physician,"[2] we must take into account St. Paul's delicate health, his privation and imprisonment, his discouragements and his fatigue.

The feelings resulting from a survey of these four Epistles.

Is it not quite evident that when we thus range over these four Epistles in companionship, so to speak, with their acknowledged author, we become conscious that we are not on an island, with the barren sea around us but on a table-land, from whence we can survey a wide and fruitful country, both near to us and far off? And not only so. Is it not quite evident that this table-land is, so to speak, organically connected by strong continuous ridges, and by rich opening valleys, with the wide country that is so suggestive of admiration and contentment?

III.

Argument from detailed comparison with the Acts of the Apostles.

But independently of the general argument which resides in the identity of St. Paul's character, as presented to us by these four acknowledged Epistles, and those other parts of the New Testament which for the moment are supposed to be under suspicion, there is the *comparison in various points of detail* between these four documents and that part of the Acts of the Apostles

[1] *Ibid.* xxviii. 15. [2] Col. iv. 14.

which relates to the period of his life during which he wrote them. In this way of stating the question there is nothing illogical The narrative of the Acts is here only hypothetically assumed to be true. If it turns out, on a close comparison, that the narrative, without being forced, fits the Epistles so that notices of facts and persons and places fall into order easily, while yet it is evident that the narrative and the Epistles are independent sources of information, then the hypothesis becomes an argument. It comes to us with its hand full of strong evidence. The key that fits the lock is probably the right key. The confidence inspired by the four letters tends to spread itself over this part, at least, of the apostolic history. But let us see how the matter stands in detail.

1. In the account of St. Paul's first arrival at Corinth, on his second journey, it is said that he met with Aquila and Priscilla, and that "because he was of the same craft he abode with them and *wrought:* for by their occupation they were tent-makers."[1] And at a subsequent part of the history, when he has summoned the presbyters of Ephesus to an interview at Miletus, there is a very dramatic allusion to the same subject. He holds up his hands while speaking, and says, "Ye yourselves know that *these hands* have ministered

St. Paul's trade as a tent-maker.

His appeal to the elders of Ephesus.

[1] Acts xviii 3.

unto my necessities, and to them that were with me: I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak."[1] The mere comparison of these two passages ought to tend to give us confidence in the Book of the Acts. They are in the most natural, yet the most curious, harmony with one another. What St. Paul had done at Corinth, he had done at Ephesus. There is a consistency in this which is quite worthy of notice. And, further, in the one case this habit of St. Paul is mentioned merely as a fact in the course of the history: in the other it is named by himself, in a serious address, for the purpose of drawing from it a moral lesson. The unaffected naturalness of this should be observed.

Allusions in the Epistles.

Now the point before us is the reappearance of this fact of St. Paul's biography in our four Epistles, and in the manner of its appearance. They belong by the hypothesis to the same general period of his life. In writing from Ephesus the First Epistle to the Corinthians (and every circumstance fits the supposition of this place and date), he says: "Even unto this present hour I labour, working with my own hands."[2] Those who read the letter at Corinth had known him to be thus engaged, and they would feel the force of the appeal involved in the words "unto this present hour," even as the presbyters of Ephesus would feel the force

[1] Acts xx. 34, 35. [2] 1 Cor. iv. 12.

of the phrase "these hands." Yet the wildest imagination could hardly suggest that one of these passages was invented to fit the other.

But the comparison here instituted along the line of this habit of St. Paul's life carries us further. In another part of the same Epistle he virtually asserts that he might have "forborne working" with his own hands, that "the Lord has ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel;" but he had resolved not to use this power, that he might secure the additional influence arising through "making the gospel of Christ without charge."[1] Thus, as at Miletus, he draws a moral lesson from this habit of his life.

Why he worked with his own hands.

Reason given to the elders of Ephesus.

Nor is this the only instance of the same kind in the Epistles attributed to this Apostle. This discussion cannot be pursued without turning first in one direction and then in another; and wherever we turn we gather new evidence to confirm our faith. Writing to the Thessalonians he says: "Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God;"[2] and again in the second letter: "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample

In his Epistle to the Thessalonians.

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 18. [2] 1 Thess. ii. 9.

unto you to follow us."[1] Thus what he had practised at Corinth and at Ephesus, he had practised likewise at Thessalonica, the third great mercantile city of the Ægean Sea. And not only so, but in each of these cases, in writing to Corinth, in writing to Thessalonica, in speaking at Miletus, he uses the same fact of his life to point a moral lesson. Yet can any one say that these notices have been, in the slightest degree, borrowed from one another? Surely no fair mind can deny that, starting from the point taken in the uncontroverted Epistles, and following these paths through the Acts of the Apostles, and through Epistles outside the accepted group, we have found reasons for extending our confidence to those other parts of the New Testament.

Draws a moral lesson from his practice.

Notices of Aquila and Priscilla.

At Ephesus.

2. The transition from this subject to the notices of *Aquila and Priscilla* in our group of Epistles is easy and natural.[2] These notices are two. In the first letter to the Corinthians, written from Ephesus, we find the following passage: "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9.

[2] This is only a specimen of the evidence that might be supplied by reference to persons. Thus Apollos might be brought forward as a very conclusive link between the Acts and our four Epistles. In 1 Cor. iii. 6 we find it said, "I have planted, Apollos watered." This exactly, yet most artlessly, corresponds with what we learn from the Acts. Paul was first at Corinth, and then Apollos: and Apollos went to Corinth before the writing of this letter

that is in their house."[1] In the letter to the Romans we find the passage: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my sake laid down their necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles: likewise greet the church that is in their house."[2] In the one case we see these two friends of the Apostle in Ephesus, in the other we see them in Rome: the two places are widely separated; yet these two Epistles are assumed to have been written during the same Missionary Journey. At first sight this appears like a discrepancy. This appearance, however, soon dissolves into nothing upon careful examination. In the Acts it is said that the acquaintance was first formed at Corinth, under the following circumstances, before the close of the Second Missionary Journey: "at Corinth Paul found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome), and came unto them; and because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and wrought; for by their occupation they were tent-makers."[3] Next, on leaving Corinth and touching at Ephesus, he "left them there;"[4] and there they were eminently useful in the instruction of Apollos, before he pro-

At Rome.

Apparent discrepancy

Explanation.

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 19.
[2] Rom. xvi. 3, 4.
[3] See above, p. 33.
[4] Acts xviii. 19.

Harmony of the references to them.

ceeded to Corinth. All this is in most easy harmony with what we read in the first letter to the Corinthians, both as to the fact that St. Paul finds them at Ephesus, on his entering upon the Third Missionary Journey; and also as to their utility to the Church and their friendly relations with Corinth. Yet it would be very difficult for even the most suspicious critic to contend that all this was suggested by the passage in the letter, and ingeniously interwoven into the narrative of the Acts, in order to procure credit to that document.

And now as to our finding these two Christians in Rome, to which place another letter is written during the same journey, there really is no difficulty whatever in this. Adopting the usual calculations, for which the materials are ample, we find there was abundant time for Aquila and Priscilla to have reached Rome before the letter was written to that place from Corinth. It may be added that such voyages would be very natural for Jews engaged in trade; while the strong language in the Epistle to the Romans, concerning the devotedness, the utility, and hospitality of these two persons, and their friendship towards himself, is in harmony with all that we read in the Acts. It must be added that there is one more notice of them in the New Testament. In the Second Epistle to Timothy, which, if genuine, was the latest that the Apostle wrote,

Time for them to have reached Rome.

Reference to them in the 2nd Epistle to Timothy.

we find this: "Salute Prisca and Aquila."[1] Timothy seems then to have been at Ephesus; and all that need be said on this point is that they should be once more in this mercantile city, and that St. Paul's friendship towards them should continue to the end, is perfectly natural. On the whole it seems altogether reasonable to contend that such biographical threads justify our disposition to combine together St. Paul's Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles in one general conviction of trustworthiness.

3. But we may now turn to a subject of a totally different kind, with the view of ascertaining the probable relation of these three Epistles to the historic narrative. It is impossible to read these three Epistles without perceiving how strongly pervaded St. Paul was, at the time of writing them, with the anxious interest of *a certain collection* he was promoting *for the poor Christians in Judæa*. The facts of the case and his feeling on the subject are summed up in the following sentence of the Epistle to the Romans: "Now I am going unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints: for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints that are in Jerusalem."[2] If we examine the letters to the Corinthians, we see a very large space given to this

The collection for the poor saints in Judæa.

References to it in the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians.

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 19.

[2] Rom. xv. 25, 26.

subject, with the expression of much importunity. From the first of these letters it appears that he had been doing in Galatia, in regard to this collection, what he had been doing in Macedonia and Achaia; and moreover that the most systematic arrangements were made for the completion of the "gatherings" at Corinth, and the conveying of them to Jerusalem.[1] If we turn to the Second Epistle, we find two whole chapters given to this subject with great earnestness of feeling.[2] Now, at first sight it might be thought very strange that a subject which engrossed St. Paul's attention and emotion so much during his sojourn in Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia should not be named in the direct narrative. A considerable space is devoted in the Book of the Acts to details of what occurred in this particular part of St. Paul's life; yet no mention is made there of the active business of this collection, which was certainly going on then. Now, we may say with confidence that there would have been some mention of the subject if this part of the narrative had been intentionally and ingeniously constructed, so as to fit what we find in the Epistles. Hence we have in this fact an argument for the independence of the Book of the Acts. But if we read on beyond this part of it to the account of what took place in Judæa, after St. Paul had been apprehended

Two chapters on the subject in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians.

Not noticed in the history of this part of St. Paul's life in the Acts.

An argument for the independence of the Book.

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 1–4 [2] 2 Cor. viii., ix.

in the Temple at Jerusalem, and was on his trial at Cæsarea, we find quite casually and unexpectedly, yet quite naturally, this business on which St. Paul was at this period so intent, coming to view. He says before Felix, regarding the errand on which he had been brought to Jerusalem: "Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings." [1] This is a sudden note of inner harmony between the two classes of documents that are before us, which is of the utmost value to us in estimating their authenticity.

Incidentally referred to at a later period.

In his speech before Felix.

And there is a wider view of the subject, which ought by no means to be omitted, for it strengthens the argument considerably. This is not the only place in the Acts of the Apostles where we find St. Paul actively interested in the benevolent collecting of money for the poor in Judæa. At a much earlier period (at the end of the eleventh chapter, and at the end of the twelfth) he is represented to us as busily engaged in the same way. Taking the evidence that is before us, we might almost say that this was one of the enthusiasms of his life. And the very same thing comes to view in the fourth of that group of Epistles, of which three have been already adduced in connection with this topic. After the account in the Epistle to the Galatians of the conference at Jerusalem regarding the necessity of circum-

An earlier collection.

One of the enthusiasms of his life.

[1] Acts xxiv. 17.

cision for Gentile converts, and after the statement of the general agreement regarding the division of spiritual labour between St. Peter and St. Paul, it is added: "Only they would that we should remember the poor, *the same which I also was forward to do.*"[1] Thus there emerges here also, quite naturally and unexpectedly, from the context a proof alike of the necessitous condition of the Christians in Judæa, and of St. Paul's industrious alacrity to procure for them relief.

References to places.

4. The same kind of argument which arises out of an observation of persons and circumstances, can be drawn likewise from the mention of *places*. All other instances being set on one side, an illustration may be given from the manner in which

Damascus.

Damascus is named, both in two of the Epistles before us, and in the Book of the Acts; that Damascus should have been indelibly impressed on St. Paul's mind, that every circumstance of his approach to that city, of his experience within it, of his flight from its walls, should have remained vivid in his memory ever after is absolutely certain, if the story related in the ninth chapter of this book is true. Thus, in the stories related in the twenty-second and twenty-sixth chapters, we are not surprised to find the reiterated naming of Damascus in St. Paul's two speeches. When he is addressing the Hebrew mob, under circumstances of great ex-

[1] Gal. ii. 10.

citement, he says, "I went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound to Jerusalem;" and he proceeds, "As I came nigh unto Damascus, suddenly there shone a great light round about me." and presently afterwards, "being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus."[1] So, when he is speaking before Festus and Agrippa, he says, "As I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday I saw a light from heaven;" and when he has described "the heavenly vision," and said that he was "not disobedient to it," he adds that first "unto them of Damascus" he showed the necessity of repentance and of "works meet for repentance."[2] All this reiteration of the name of the place is true to nature and to the facts of the story. It is not at all necessary to his argument. If he had been on the way to Alexandria or to Antioch, when the vision from heaven led to his conversion, the result as to persuasion and conviction would have been the same. But the whole local scene on the south of the wall of Damascus was indelibly impressed on his memory. And now we may add, that what we find in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Galatians is equally true to nature and to the facts which he so vividly remembered. "In Damascus, the governor under Aretas, the king, kept the city of the Damas-

His conversion near Damascus.

His references to it in his speech before Festus and Agrippa.

In the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians.

[1] Acts xxii. 6, 10, 11. [2] *Ibid.* xxvi.

cenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."[1] The agreement of this account of his escape with the account given of the same transaction in the Acts, while yet "it is related with such difference of circumstances as renders it utterly improbable that one should be derived from the other" has been noted by Paley;[2] and to what he says this might be added that there is no mention whatever of Aretas in the Acts. But the points to which the reader's attention is here asked is this, that St. Paul's quick feeling and memory regarding this subject are manifest. Damascus was impressed upon his recollection as no other place in the world had been. And a similar remark may be made of the manner of the allusion to the same city in the nearly contemporary Epistle to the Galatians. He is speaking of his call to the apostleship, and he says: "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."[3] We might remark on the exact, yet evidently undesigned, connection of this with what is stated in the direct narrative: "Straightway" at Damascus "he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God," and with his

His feeling towards Damascus.

His reference in the Epistle to the Galatians.

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 32. [2] *Horæ Paulinæ*, No. ii. [3] Gal. i. 17.

statement before Agrippa, that at once he began his preaching first in that city.[1] But the point before us is the instinctive feeling with which he names Damascus. He has not stated above that it was there that he had been converted, and that it was thence he had gone to Arabia. With a mind full of the recollection, he simply says that he "returned to Damascus." Possibly he had told to the Galatians, when he was among them, the story of his Conversion. Indeed we can hardly doubt that he had done so. But this only makes what we find here to appear the more natural; and, just to add one thing which tends to rescue the narrative of the Acts at this point from any semblance of imitation, the visit to Arabia is not mentioned there at all, as it certainly would have been in an attempt to obtain credit by correspondence with the Epistle.

Its incidental and natural character.

Only specimens have been taken from a solid mass of evidence, which might be exhibited in many particulars. But enough has been written to show that, when travelling carefully through these four Epistles and looking well around us, we find paths diverging on this side and that, along which we might move without any interruption, so as to traverse the whole of the New Testament, and to perceive that it is a continuous region, with all the parts happily related to one another.

The relation and continuity of all parts of the New Testament.

[1] Acts ix. 20; xxvi. 20.

As regards the topic on which we have been last engaged, the comparative examination of these four Epistles, on the one hand, and the history of the Acts on the other, coalesce into an argument, the force of which it is very difficult to resist. It is precisely the kind of evidence which tells very forcibly in a court of justice. Let us imagine ourselves in such a court, with four authentic letters, concerning which no doubt is entertained. The question is regarding the trustworthiness of a continuous narrative dealing with the same subjects, incidents, and persons. Is it not evident that such circumstances as those which have just been named, would weigh very powerfully with a jury, and would probably secure a favourable verdict? One very interesting fact in Paley's life is that he was always fond of observing circumstantial evidence. When he was a young man, he spent much of his time in attending trials, and showed the greatest eagerness and patience in watching the fate of prisoners; and all through life he displayed marked cleverness in weighing evidence, and a great love of that kind of pointed investigation which is required in the cross-examination of witnesses. We have the result in the *Horæ Paulinæ*, a book which is of infinite value, and which never can be obsolete.

The force of the argument.

One remark, which has been justly made

regarding that book, may be fairly claimed likewise on behalf of this unpretending Tract which must now draw to its end. Whatever evidential argument it contains, all other Christian evidence remains intact. It sometimes happens that a position in apologetics depends upon the securing of some other position first, and that when one part of the defensive ground is lost, other parts must be surrendered also. Not so here. Whatever confirmations of our faith are derived from prophecy, from miracle, from adaptation to the needs of man, from science, from collateral history, from actual success and human experience,—all these sources of conviction flow freely and unimpaired, whatever be the fate of the argument here set forth.

The independent character of the argument.

I have no desire to exaggerate the importance of this slight endeavour. The great edifice of Christian Evidence is complicated and majestic, and consists of many parts. What is here attempted is only a buttress. Yet a buttress may have its value as a helpful, though subordinate, part of a noble building, and may do something for the support of a structure which is deep and strong in its foundations, and bright with the radiance of heaven on its pinnacles above. Any strength that may be communicated in this way is communicated to the whole; and nothing is to be despised which may help in giving confidence in

The subordinate yet important place of the argument.

that "great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him—God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."[1]

[1] Heb. ii. 3, 4.

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